Game of the Month: THE NEVERHOOD

28 REVIEWS

PC GAMES™

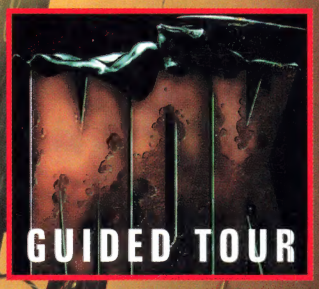
THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO COMPUTER GAMING

HOLIDAY Game Guide

84 Hot Stocking Stuffers

MURDER DEATH KILL

1ST LOOK



VIOLENT & FUNNY

Diary of an Online Madman

ONE GAMER'S ACCOUNT

REVIEWS:

- Syndicate Wars
- F-22 Lightning II
- Madden NFL '97
- MegaRace 2
- Lighthouse
- NHL '97
- Star Control 3
- MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries
- Monster Truck Madness

An IDG Communications Publication

December 1996
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ONLY A FOOL TRIES
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WITH HANDGUNS.

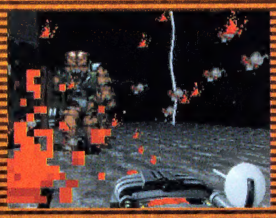


LARGE CALIBER AUTOMATICS DO THE JOB MUCH MORE QUICKLY.

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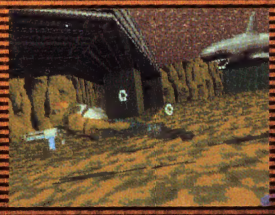












- **Explore 11 new levels, several based on current hit movies**
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- **Smell steaming entrails as Duke's new microwave cannon fries and explodes those alien bastards**
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- **Exciting new special effects, including deadly lightning and new features such as simulated multiplayer games (against up to 7 other Dukes) on a single computer**
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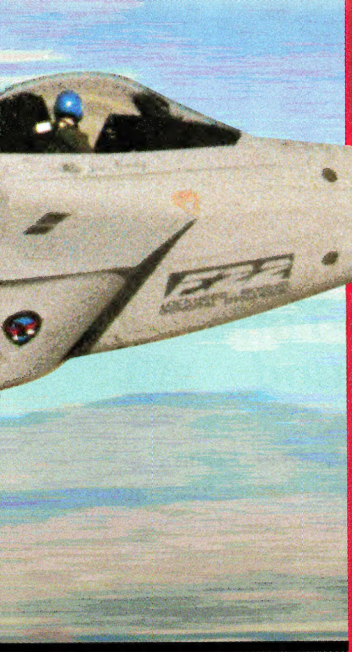
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September 1996

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Computer Player
September 1996

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- Computer Games Strategy Plus
August 1996

"Still pictures can't do justice to the smoothness and beauty produced by Voxel Space 2. Players will have to see the game [Armored Fist 2- M1A2 Abrams] for themselves to appreciate just how groundbreaking NovaLogic's 3D engine really is."
- Next Generation
August 1996

VOXEL SPACE2

VOXEL SPACE2

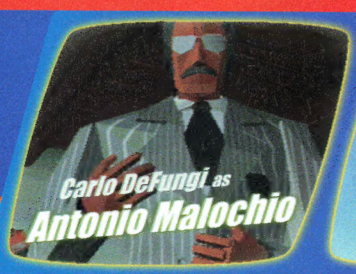
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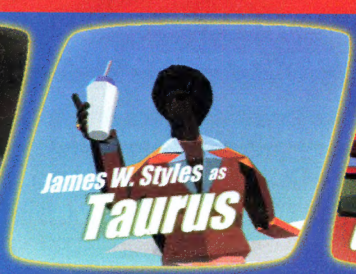
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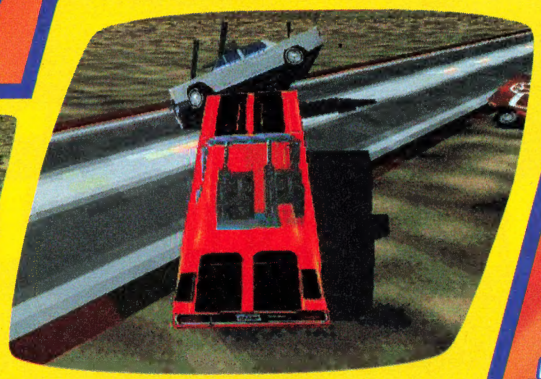
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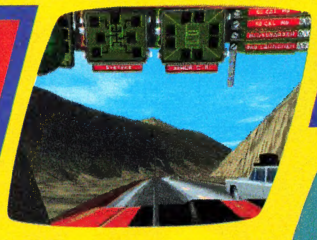


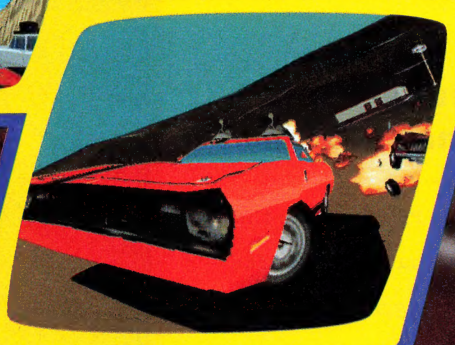




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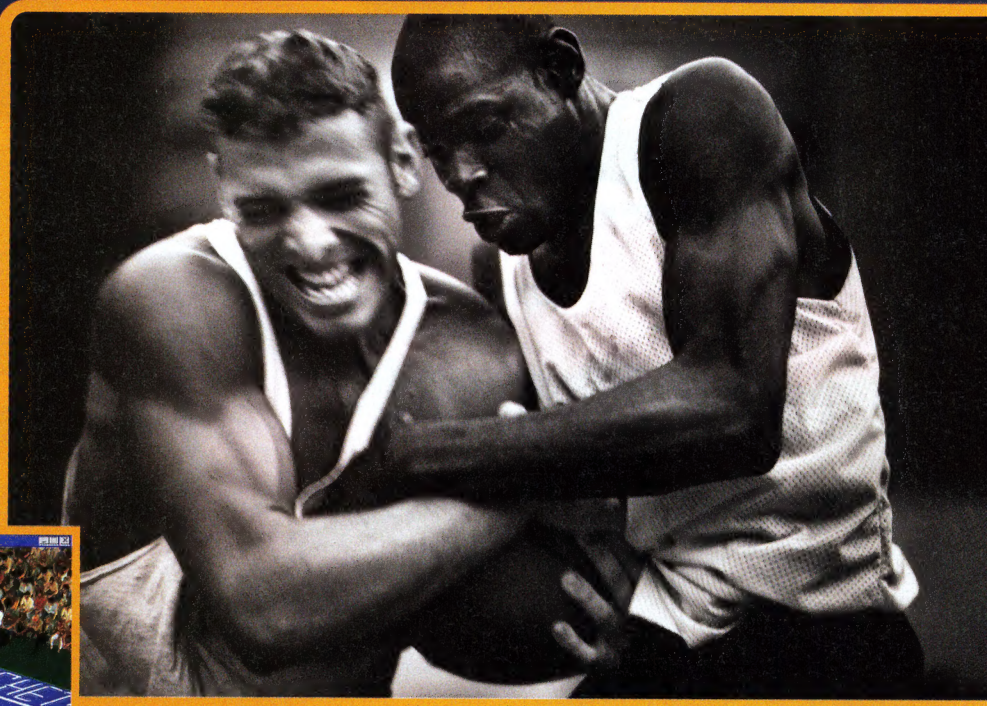


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You've always been a tad

TOO COMPETITIVE AT HOOPS.



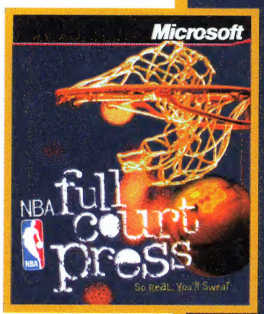
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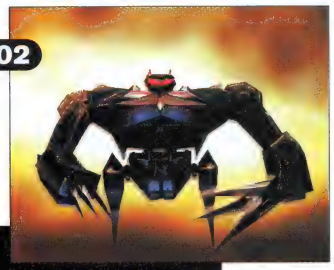
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102 Guided Tour: MDK

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Shiny Entertainment recovers from its case of the worms and tackles good, old-fashioned sci-fi violence with its eye-dazzling MDK. Join our extended preview of one of the most anticipated and controversial action/strategy games of 1997.



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PLAY the Demo on the disc

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 12

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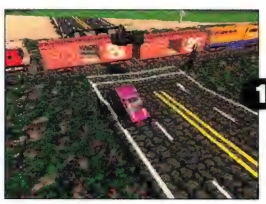
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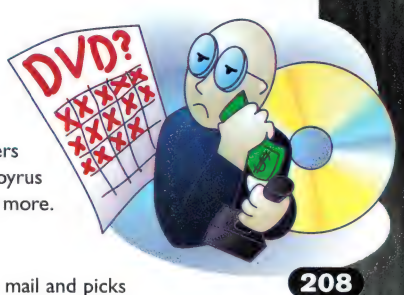
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You've seen our Guided Tour. You've dreamed the dreams. Now here's your chance—pick up a free copy of Toonstruck, plus some original artwork from the game. All it takes is a stamp and a brain.



Think you've mastered all these games?



So do they.

"I'm the Quake master. You're fresh meat."





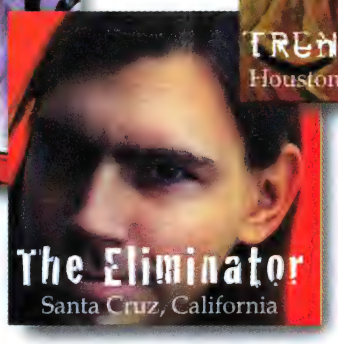


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Multiplayer Maladies

These days, when one of our editors comes dragging into the Monday-morning office, bleary, incoherent and sporting a 5 o'clock shadow at 9 a.m., none of the usual excuses apply:

Another party weekend? Sorry, no.

Overdid the yard work thing? Yeah, right.

Kidnapped by the Dallas Cowboys cheerleaders? Dream on. That was last week.

After five or six cups of delectable institutional coffee fresh from our lunch/mail/janitorial-supplies room, the disoriented editor manages to croak out a few barely understandable words—"Multiplayer...online...45 hours straight... crushed 'em all"—before dropping back into the senseless repose experienced only by true electronic champions.

If you share that Monday morning glaze with our *PC Games* staffers, you've also discovered that multiplayer gaming pretty much redefines the meaning of "interactive entertainment." Conventional computer gaming just can't touch it. No solo man-to-machine conflict can capture the thrill of fragging real people in real time. There's simply nothing like sharing the wanton excess of virtual violence with fellow death-matchers across the city or around the world. It's great to win; it's even better to do it at a real person's expense.

And that, after all, is the essence of gaming. From the days of chess and poker to Duke and Quake, gaming has been a vehicle for making new friends, testing new skills, enduring or dispensing defeat, and bragging or bawling about it afterward in the locker room or, these days, the chat room.

That's why all of us at *PC Games* are so high on the growing world of multiplayer online gaming. It has that head-to-head, human-vs.-human excitement—not to mention the gloat opportunities—that computer games have lacked until now.

As Reviews Editor Rob Smith confesses in his feature this month on online multiplayer gaming, logging in and loading up is the ultimate for computer players—not to mention one swell way to burn a whole weekend without getting anywhere near a lawnmower.

I suspect we've got many more online weekends and bleary Mondays ahead of us. And as we continue to sacrifice our downtime to The Cause (hey, it's a dirty job, but...), you can count on us—gamer to gamer—to bring you the lowdown on how and where to find the newest, the hottest, and the wildest multiplayer experiences online. See you there.



Gini Talmadge
President & Publisher

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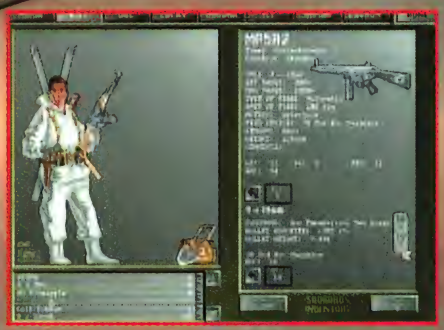
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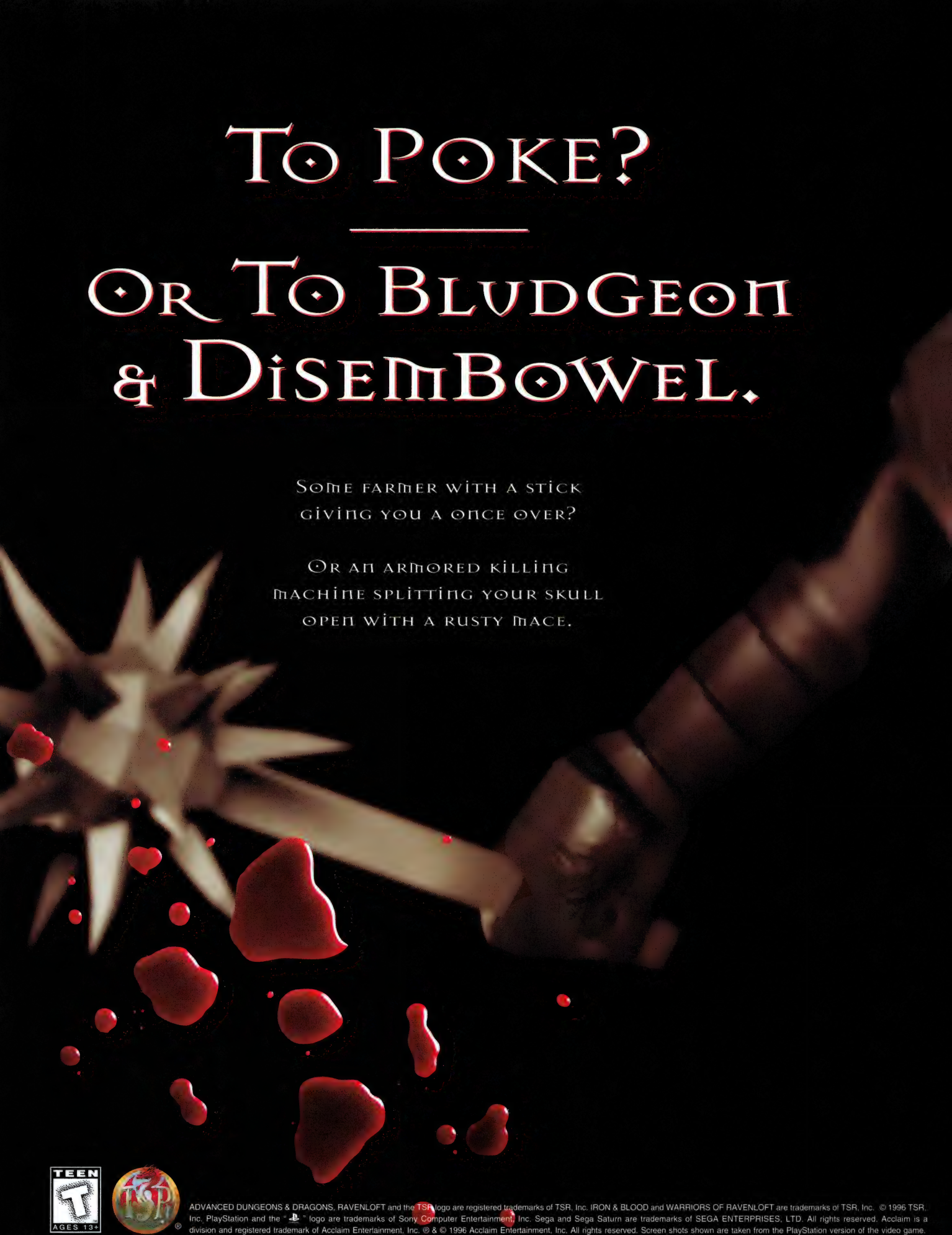
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DEMO OF THE MONTH
Toonstruck
Virgin Interactive Entertainment

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What's on the Disc

Demo of the Month
Toonstruck (Virgin)

Action Games
MDK (Playmates)
DeathDrome (Viacom New Media)
Cylindrix (Goldtree Enterprises)
Terminal Velocity (GT Interactive)
Necrodome (SSI)
Powerslave (Playmates)
Duke Nukem 3D (GT Interactive)
Quake 1.06 (id Software)
Killing Time (3DO)

Adventure Games
Discworld 2: Mortality Bytes (Psygnosis)
Ace Ventura (7th Level)

Sports Games
HyperBlade (Activision)

Strategy Games
Syndicate Wars (Electronic Arts)
Gene Wars (Electronic Arts)
M.A.X. (Interplay)
Z (Virgin)
Star General (SSI)
Warcraft (Blizzard)

Utilities
SciTech Disk Doctor 5.3
DOSWINKY

Online Services
TEN
Mplayer
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Getting Started

Win 95

1. Insert the disc in the CD-ROM drive.
2. After a few seconds the disc should autoplay. If it doesn't, use Windows Explorer to find the *pcgames.exe* file on the CD and double-click to run.

Win 3.1

1. Start Windows.
2. Insert the disc in the CD-ROM drive.
3. Select Run from the Program Manager's File menu.
4. Type "d:\install" in the Command Line box and press Enter.





Getting Around

Take a gander at the list of hot demos on the Welcome screen. From this first screen you can also sign up for 50 hours of free connect time on AOL. When you're ready to play the games, click on the arrow in the bottom-right corner.

First up will be the option to play our Demo of the Month: Toonstruck. Click on the large screen shot to get straight to the details on how to get up and running. Scroll through the other pages to uncover the buttons leading to our 18 other great games.

In Case of Emergency

The impulses of PCs mean that you may occasionally run into difficulties. Here's how to access the demos manually if, for some reason, the interface fails to run: Open My Computer. Right-click on the PC Games CD logo and click Open. All the game directories will be displayed. Double-click on the game you want to play and locate the *readme* file for that game. Double-click to open it and read the installation instructions.

Most games have a *setup.exe* or *install.exe* file that configures the game for your machine. Follow the instructions to get optimum performance (e.g., rebooting in MS-DOS mode to get the best out of the DOS-based games).

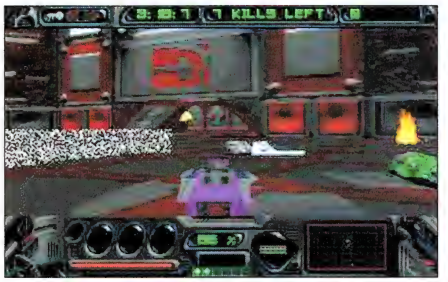
If you're still having problems, consult the help files at our Web site, www.pcgamesmag.com, or e-mail technical support questions not addressed in the files to *ctou@pcgamesmag.com.*

Action Games

MDK
Playmates

You've read our in-depth Guided Tour on the making of MDK. Now see it move. Check out the opening movie, which shows Kurt ready to get down and dirty with the bad guys. If this doesn't whet your appetite for the playable demo (coming soon), you're dead already.

DeathDrome
Viacom New Media



Try out the opening arena of Viacom's futuristic prison spectator sport. Race against seven other crims in a duel to the death. It's fast, furious, and a heap o' fun to boot.

Terminal Velocity
GT Interactive

Included in the setup details of the TEN and Mplayer software is the shareware version of this fast-action shooter from Terminal Reality. Get it installed and get online to put your piloting prowess to the test.

Necrodome
SSI

Also included with the TEN software is SSI's contribution to the arena-based action shooters. Hop onboard for a few levels of explosive action, with plenty of funky features to give it a leg up in this crowded market.

Powerslave
Playmates

Hyped and finally here, this Duke-style shooter puts you in an ancient Egyptian world as an Indiana Jones–type adventurer. There are plenty of secrets to uncover, traps and tricks to avoid, and age-old bad guys to shoot.

Duke Nukem 3D
GT Interactive

Just in case you've been on planet Zog for the past six months and have never had the chance to play Duke, do it now. The shareware version is fun in its own right, but on TEN, it's a blast. You'll be able to install it through the TEN setup procedure.

Cylindrix
Goldtree Enterprises

Fast-paced arcade action in the tradition of Tempest comes bundled in this shooter featuring advanced AI, colorful graphics, and 3D views. Goldtree's first delve into the computer-game market has already received plaudits on the Internet. Judge for yourself.

Quake 1.06
id Software



The most up-to-date shareware release is on the CD to save you the download and give you something to play on Mplayer. There's no excuse for not doing so. None at all. So embrace Quake. Now.

Killing Time
3DO

Think of this chilling first-person shooter as Doom meets the 11th Hour, and you'll have a good idea of how it plays.

Adventure Games

Ace Ventura
7th Level

Allllllll righty then! There's only one name to call when the animal kingdom runs into the wrong kind of characters: It's Ace Ventura, Pet Detective, hot on the latest case.

Sports Games

HyperBlade
Activision

It's a futuristic combo of hockey, lacrosse, soccer, and felony assault, played for keeps inside a giant half-pipe. It's all the rage in the 21st century–and yours to enjoy right now.

Strategy Games

Syndicate Wars
Electronic Arts

Hey, it's the sequel to Syndicate! We've gone to extraordinary lengths to get you this playable mission as soon as humanly possible, 'cause we know that you're gonna want to play it for some time to come.

M.A.X.
Interplay

Using a "concurrent" time method, M.A.X. manages to combine the detailed strategies and planning of turn-based games with the heat of battle in a cool new way. This superb demo provides a suitable taste of this gorgeous in-depth strategy game.

Gene Wars

Electronic Arts

Taking a unique slant on the world conquest/civilization-building concept, Gene Wars features mutant creation and aggressive behavior in a passive style! It's different and it's entertaining, and this playable demo shows you how and why.



Z

Virgin Interactive Entertainment

Command and Conquer with crack-ups? Take charge of an army of mischievous machinery in a comic real-time war. It's military mirth from Europe's legendary Bitmap Brothers.

Star General

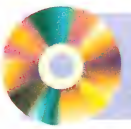
SSI

SSI's General series gets even more stellar–literally! Assume the bridge and take command of a fleet of interplanetary craft as you vie for control of space.

Warcraft

Blizzard

If the multiplayer bug has bitten, try out Warcraft: Orcs vs. Humans on the online services. The hugely popular sequel has caused something of a furor, but that's because it had such good foundations in this original. Give it a go.



If you are a current subscriber and would like to upgrade your subscription to include the CD-ROM of playable game demos, please contact us at 800-688-4575.

OFFICIAL CONTEST RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR TEN CONTEST

1. No Purchase Necessary. No purchase or payment of any money is necessary to enter. To enter the sweepstakes, print your name and address (including your city, state, and zip code) on a card and mail it to: Total Entertainment Network Contest, PC Games, 951 Mariner's Island Blvd., Suite 700, San Mateo, CA 94404. Enter as often as you like, but each entry must be mailed separately. All entries must be handwritten. Mechanically reproduced entries will not be accepted. Entries must be postmarked by December 24, 1996. Entries will not be returned. The sponsor and PC Games Publishing, Inc., assume no responsibility for lost, mutilated, late, or misdirected entries.

2. Prizes. Total Entertainment Network Contest prizes and, grand prize will be awarded. Grand prize is valued at less than $500. The aggregate retail value of all prizes is less than $5,000 US dollars. Winners will be determined at a drawing to be held on December 30, 1996. All prizes will be awarded. Prize winners will be notified by mail by January 30, 1997. To claim your prize, send your winning game piece to Total Entertainment Network Contest, PC Games, 951 Mariner's Island Blvd, Suite 700, San Mateo, CA 94404.

3. Odds of Winning. Odds of winning depend upon the number of qualified entries received.

4. Eligibility. Sweepstakes are open to residents of the United States. However, for entrants under 18 years of age, a parent or guardian must be designated the winner if the entrant is selected and prizes will be awarded to a parent or guardian in trust for that minor. Citizens of Canada are excluded from participation and receiving any prizes from the sweepstakes. Employees of PC Games Publishing, Inc,. and/or Total Entertainment Network, their subsidiaries, affiliates, advertising agencies and immediate families are not eligible for prizes. No more than one prize will be awarded to any entrant.

5. Requirements and Responsibility of Winners. Winners will be required to sign an affidavit of eligibility and a publicity release that will allow the use of winners' names and likenesses for other promotional activities by the sponsor and/or Infotainment World, Inc. All federal, state and local taxes are the responsibility of winners.

6. Winners List. For a list of winners, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Total Entertainment Network Contest, PC Games, 951 Mariner's Island Blvd, Suite 700, San Mateo, CA 94404. Requests for winners lists must be received by February 15. 1997. Allow 4 weeks for delivery of winners list.

7. Record Keeping. A list of the winners will be kept for at least two years.

8. Disclaimer. This contest is void where prohibited.

9. Liabilities. This sweepstakes/contest is sponsored by PC Games Publishing, Inc., and Total Entertainment Network, which are together solely responsible for its conduct, completion and awarding of prizes. All decisions of PC Games Publishing, Inc., and Total Entertainment Network on all matters relating to the promotion are final. PC Games Publishing, Inc., and Total Entertainment Network reserve the right to cancel or modify the contest in whole or in part. PC Games Publishing, Inc., and participating sponsors assume no liability resulting from the use of the prizes. By accepting the prize, each winner for themselves and their families indemnifies and holds harmless PC Games Publishing, Inc., and participating sponsors from and against any liabilities in any way relating to the acceptance or use of the prize awarded or travel related to the sweepstakes or prizes. Additional releases may be required for the prize winner. Submission of an entry is acknowledgment of and agreement to be bound by all terms and conditions of this contest. VOID IN WHOLE OR IN PART WHERE PROHIBITED BY LAW.

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2. Prizes. Amok Contest prizes will be awarded. Each prize is valued at less than $500. Winners will be determined at a drawing to be held on November 31, 1996. All prizes will be awarded. Prize winners will be notified by mail by December 30, 1996. To claim your prize, send your winning game piece to Amok Contest, PC Games, 951 Mariner's Island Blvd, Suite 700, San Mateo, CA 94404.

3. Odds of Winning. Odds of winning will be determined by number of entries.

4. Eligibility. Sweepstakes are open to residents of the United States. However, for entrants under 18 years of age, a parent or guardian must be designated the winner if the entrant is selected. Citizens of Canada are excluded from participation and receiving any prizes from the sweepstakes. Employees of PC Games Publishing, Inc. and/or GT Interactive, their subsidiaries, affiliates, advertising agencies and immediate families are not eligible for prizes. No more than one prize will be awarded to any entrant.

5. Requirements and Responsibility of Winners. Winners will be required to sign an affidavit of eligibility and a publicity release that will allow the use of winners' names and likenesses for other promotional activities by the sponsor and/or Infotainment World, Inc. All federal, state and local taxes are the responsibility of winners.

6. Winners List. For a list of winners, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Amok Contest, PC Games, 951 Mariner's Island Blvd, Suite 700, San Mateo, CA 94404. Requests for winners lists must be received by January 15, 1997. Allow 4 weeks for delivery of winners list.

7. Record Keeping. A list of the winners will be kept for at least two years.

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9. Liabilities. This sweepstakes/contest is sponsored by PC Games Publishing, Inc., and GT Interactive, which are together solely responsible for its conduct, completion and awarding of prizes. All decisions of PC Games Publishing, Inc., and GT Interactive on all matters relating to the promotion are final. PC Games Publishing, Inc., and participating sponsors assume no liability resulting from the use of the prizes. By accepting the prize, each winner for themselves and their families indemnifies and holds harmless PC Games Publishing, Inc., and participating sponsors from and against any liabilities in any way relating to the acceptance or use of the prize awarded or travel related to the sweepstakes or prizes. Additional releases may be required for the prize winner.

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Airdropped into first person and third person landscapes, you must swim, crawl and otherwise run like hell through **30-plus levels** of gameplay. Unique **Stacked Sector Technology**™ allows you complete 360° freedom of gameplay. With just a machete to begin with, search for **6 other weapons** like hand grenades, a flame thrower, an M60 machine gun and a magical cobra staff. **Dynamic lighting** allows for stunning visual effects. Cross bridges, crawl through tunnels and swim through underwater grottos. Your only salvation is the guiding Spirit of the Great Pharaoh Ramses. He's the only one in this god-forsaken neighborhood who wants to help you get a forwarding address.

So welcome to the nightmare of Ramses' tomb. And enjoy your stay. It may last forever.

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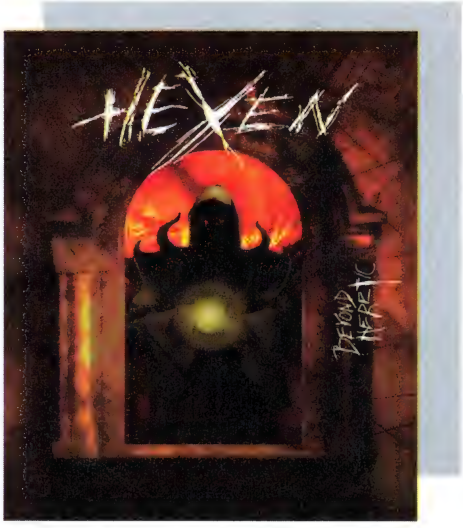
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CLINICAL MANUAL OF MENTAL DISORDERS



GT Interactive Software
www.gtinteractive.com

ANTISOCIAL PERSONALITY DISORDER:



Now Available

Perhaps the most disturbing issue here is that this game is one of the best-selling games of 1995.

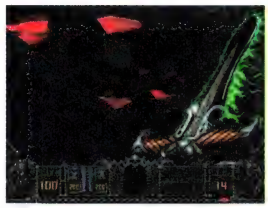
- Shoot 'em up action from the creators of Doom
- Destroy the treacherous Serpent Rider and restore order to the Cronos dimension
- Jump, fly, throw lightning bolts, or even cast evil spells

MATURE 17+ AGES 17+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

RSAC ADVISORY VIOLENCE Blood and gore

DOS/Windows® 95/Macintosh®







Now Available

This manifestation of the disorder is of a more reclusive nature.

- The barren artist retreat of the late eccentric designer, Thurston Last
- Rebuild the Muse Machine, harness the power of the Muses and restore the resort to its original grandeur
- Solve brain-numbing puzzles along the way

KIDS TO ADULTS K-A CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Windows 95/Macintosh



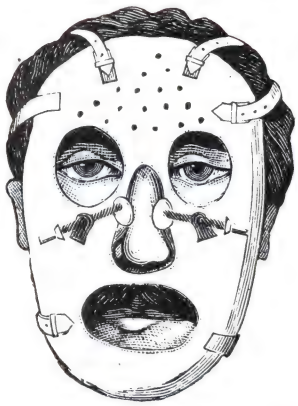


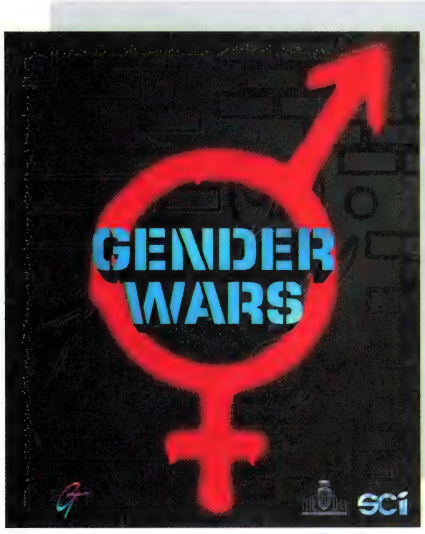
Buy 2 games and get a third

CD-ROM

Hexen™ ©1995 Raven Software Corporation. All Rights Reserved. Published by id Software, Inc. 9™ ©1996 Tribeca Interactive, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Created and published by

A pattern of disregard for and violation of the rights of others.

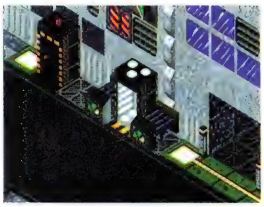




Now Available

What we see here is a definite cry for help.

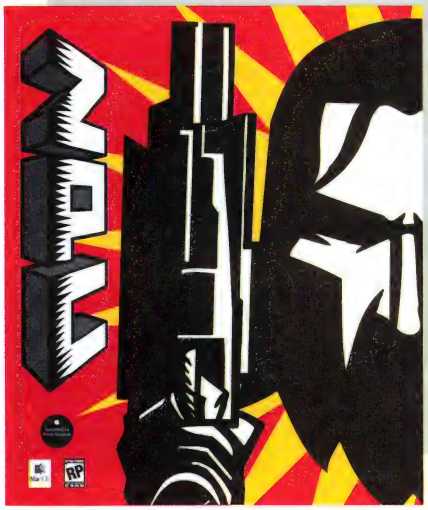
- Play as either male or female and annihilate the opposite sex
- Choose from among 28, equally anti-social missions within each sector
- Blow up virtually everything in sight





MATURE M AGES 17+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

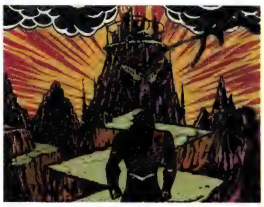
DOS



Available October '96

Here we see, not just violence but ultra violence.

- Intense action thriller
- Evil alternate reality dictatorship, where the player must solve the mystery of their former identity
- Nightmarish artwork of underground phenomenon Aidan Hughes and the industrial sounds of Roland and Paul Barker





MATURE M AGES 17+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

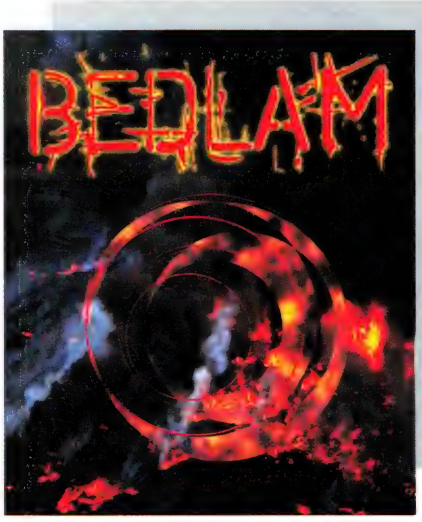
Windows 95/Macintosh

one free. **Antisocial types will be unwilling to share news of this offer with others.**

Availability dates subject to change.

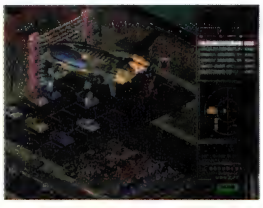
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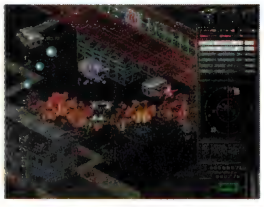
IMPULSE-CONTROL DISORDER:



Pray you never see a case this extreme.

- Control 3 independent robots and fight your enemy on 3 different battlefronts
- Totally interactive environments – blow up virtually everything in sight
- Thousands of enemies, incredibly destructive weapons, numerous power-ups and puzzles





TEEN T AGES 13+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

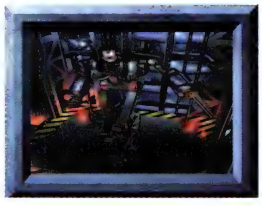
Now Available

Windows 95/DOS/Macintosh



Here we see a perfect example of impulse-control disorder.

- 3-D futuristic, "Gladiatorial Tournament"
- 60 supremely intelligent opponents with unique fighting styles and awe-some weaponry
- 20 different playing arenas
- 4 player network compatibility





TEEN T AGES 13+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Available October '96

DOS

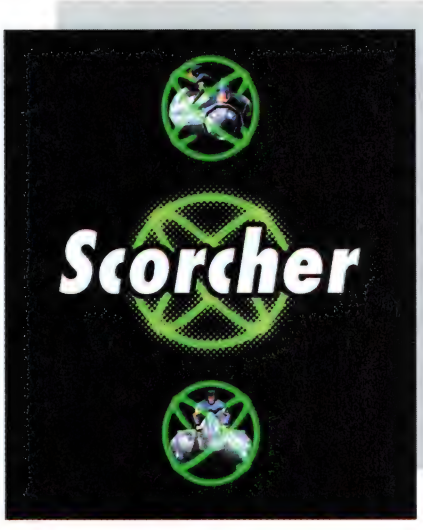
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CD-ROM

Bedlam™ is licensed from Mirage Technologies (Multimedia) Ltd. ©1996 Mirage Technologies (Multimedia) Ltd. All Rights Reserved. XS™ ©1996 SCi (Sales Curve Interactive) Ltd. All Rights

Episodes of failure to resist aggressive impulses that result in serious assaultive acts or destruction of property.





Available November '96

There's no misdiagnosing this one.

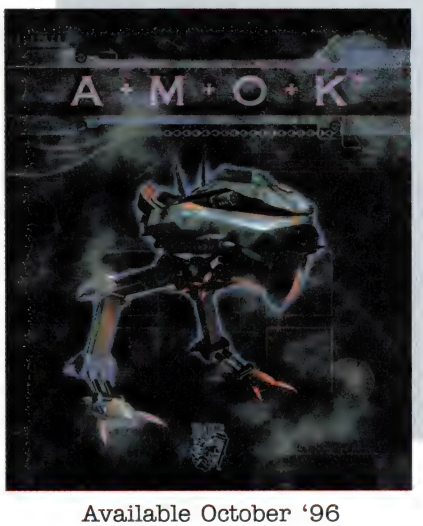
- Graphically-advanced, futuristic cyber-cycle racing
- Pit skills against a pack of high-speed rivals on totally outrageous tracks
- Screaming through a white-knuckled world of shadows and danger





KIDS TO ADULTS
K-A
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Windows 95/DOS



Available October '96

The name says it all.

- Best graphics, fastest gameplay and most diverse replayability in its genre
- 3D shooter puts player in control of a hi-tech battle walker on one of many suicide missions
- Expansive, cutting-edge settings occur on land, underground and even under-water





TEEN
T
AGES 13+
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

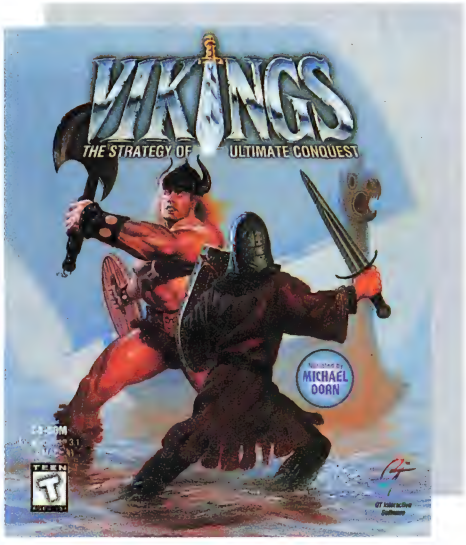
Windows 95/DOS

one free. **Impulse-control disorder types will be so excited by this offer they will probably roll up this publication and smack someone in the head with it.**

Availability dates subject to change.

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DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR:



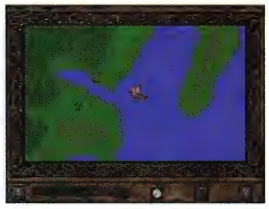
Now Available

This is a somewhat frightening manifestation of delusions of grandeur.

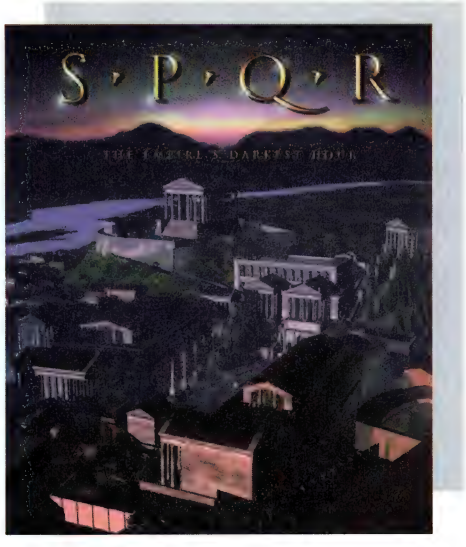
- Scheme your moves, strengthen your arms and conquer the world as a 9th century rack-and-ruin Viking
- Wreak havoc on unsuspecting villages, crushing all and carrying off spoils
- Narrated by Michael Dorn

TEEN T AGES 13+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Windows 3.1/Macintosh







Available November '96

Here the player believes he must save the Roman Empire.

- Navigate a labyrinth of politics, murder and deceit
- Totally immersive and faster than the hit web game
- Historically accurate reconstruction of Ancient Rome, 205 A.D.

RATING PENDING RP CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Windows 95 & 3.1/Macintosh





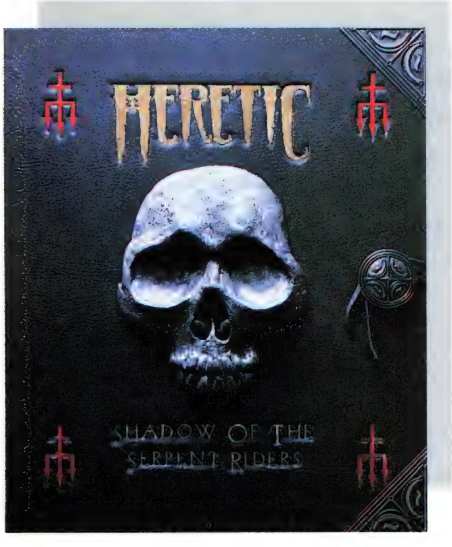
Buy 2 games and get a third

CD-ROM

Vikings: The Strategy of Ultimate Conquest™ ©1996 GT Interactive Software Corp. All Rights Reserved. S.P.Q.R.™ ©1996 CyberSites, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Created by CyberSites, Inc. Heretic: Shadow of the

Delusions of inflation of worth, power, knowledge, identity or special relationship to a deity or famous person.
(e.g., Nordic Gods, ancient Romans, heretics, commanders of inter-galactic space ships)





Now Available

Yes. It's as disturbing as it sounds.

- The ultimate sword and sorcery battlefest
- Fluid, seamless realism (which unfortunately, only serves to reinforce players delusions)
- The original 3 episodes of gameplay plus 2 new full episodes

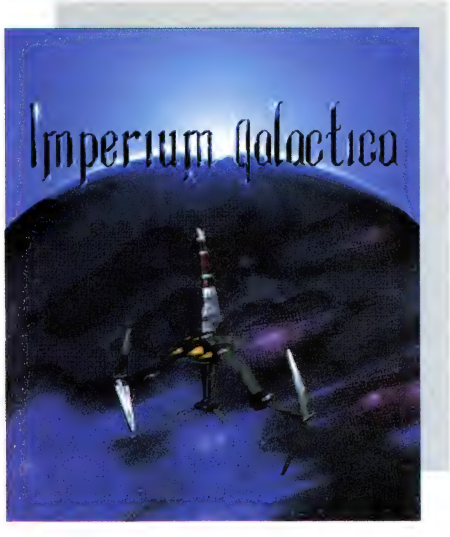
MATURE M AGES 17+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

RSAC ADVISORY VIOLENCE Blood and gore

DOS







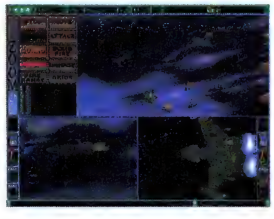
Available November '96

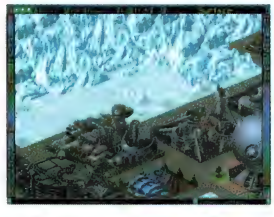
The player has to prove just how great he is by uniting the galaxy under his leadership.

- Aggressive inter-planetary colonization and cunning political negotiations with alien cultures
- Real-time strategic space and ground warfare
- Clever resource allocation requiring heavy R&D

RATING PENDING RP CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

DOS





one free. **Those who suffer from delusions of grandeur will think this offer is yet another manifestation of their greatness.**

Availability dates subject to change.

Serpent Riders™ ©1996 Raven Software Corporation. All Rights Reserved. Published by id Software, Inc. Imperium Galactica™ ©1996 GT Interactive Software Corp. All Rights Reserved. Developed by Digital Reality Inc.

OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE:

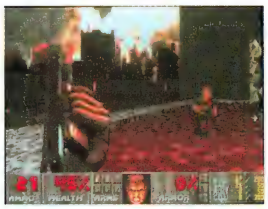


Now Available

This is only the early stage of this violent obsessive-compulsive disorder.

- The best selling action game of all time
- Higher resolution graphics and faster than ever gameplay

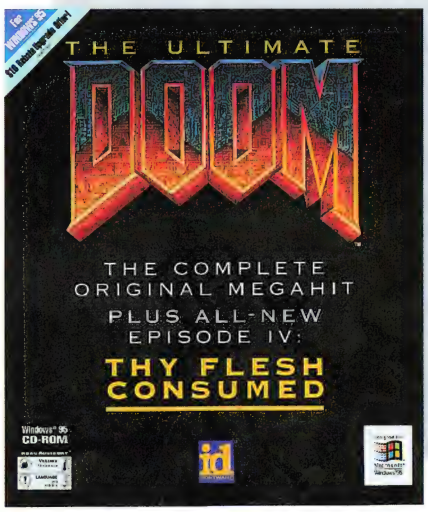




MATURE M AGES 17+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

RSAC ADVISORY VIOLENCE Blood and gore

Windows 95/DOS



Now Available

At this stage you know you have not succeeded in early intervention.

- Gaming Hall of Fame inductee
- Includes the original 3 episodes, plus a new one: "Thy Flesh Consumed"
- Beefed-up graphics and sound





MATURE M AGES 17+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

RSAC ADVISORY VIOLENCE Blood and gore

Windows 95/DOS/Macintosh

Buy 2 games and get a third

CD-ROM

Doom II™ ©1994 Id Software, Inc. All Rights Reserved. The Ultimate Doom™ ©1996 id Software, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Final Doom™ ©1996 id Software, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Kingdom O' Magic™ ©1996 SCi (Sales Curve Interactive) Ltd. All Rights Reserved.

Repetitive behaviors or mental acts (e.g., doing magic tricks, or killing) that the person feels driven to perform in response to an obsession.

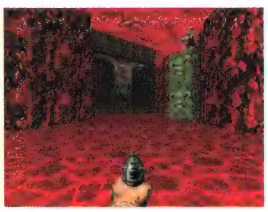




Now Available

This is it. The final stages of the disorder, and hence the final chapter in the legendary Doom series.

- Two new, 32-level versions
- New storylines
- The package Doom addicts have been craving





MATURE M AGES 17+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

REAC ADVISORY VIOLENCE Blood and gore

Windows 95/DOS/Macintosh



Now Available

This is a extremely rare case: the inability to control the impulse to perform tricks.

- Hilariously funny comedy adventure, taking place in bizarre cartoon world
- Six in-depth quests
- Over 90 wacky characters and 105 stunning animated locations





TEEN T AGES 13+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

DOS

one free. **Obsessive-compulsive types will feel the need to keep turning back to this page to make sure this offer still exists.**

Availability dates subject to change.

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Buy 2 Games Get A Third FREE

Here's the deal: Buy any 2 games from the "BUY" list below (either from your local participating retailer or by ordering directly from GT Interactive by phone), and then select a third game for FREE, plus $6.95 shipping & handling, from the "FREE" list below. Buy now and you'll automatically be entered for a chance to win 15 HOT games in GT Interactive's Game Therapy Sweepstakes. Not some dust collecting throwaways. Really cool stuff! (No purchase necessary to enter. See official sweepstakes rules and details below.)

Here's how to get your FREE game and automatically be entered into GT Interactive's Game Therapy Sweepstakes:

1) BY PHONE: Simply call GT's toll free hotline at 1-800-432-3493 ext. M607 and use your major credit card to purchase any 2 games from the "BUY" list below. Order your FREE game at the same time by choosing one from the "FREE" list below. All orders must be received between October 1, 1996 and January 31, 1997. Your credit card will not be charged until all items ordered are available for shipment. Allow 8-12 weeks for delivery.

-OR-

2) AT RETAIL: Purchase any 2 games from the "BUY" list below from your favorite participating retail software store between October 1, 1996 and January 31, 1997. Then select your FREE game from the "FREE" list below. Follow the simple steps on the coupon below and be sure to write the item number of your selection in the space indicated to receive your FREE game and automatically be entered in GT Interactive's Game Therapy Sweepstakes.

THE BUY LIST

COST	SELECTION#	TITLE
$49.95	04-11568	SPQR W95/W3.1**
$49.95	04-20158	SPQR MAC**
$49.95	04-11266	"9" W3.1
$49.95	04-20113	"9" MAC
$34.95	04-20064	HEXEN MAC
$34.95	04-10826	HEXEN W95
$49.95	04-11316	AMOK W95/DOS*
$49.95	04-11567	XS DOS*
$34.95	04-10722	ULTIMATE DOOM W95/DOS
$34.95	04-20053	ULTIMATE DOOM MAC
$34.95	04-19723	DOOM II W95/DOS
$34.95	04-20043	DOOM II MAC
$49.95	04-20114	BEDLAM MAC
$49.95	04-11265	BEDLAM W95/DOS
$49.95	04-11264	SCORCHER W95/DOS**
$49.95	04-11789	IMPERIUM GALACTICA DOS**
$44.95	04-11459	KINGDOM O' MAGIC DOS
$49.95	04-11319	FINAL DOOM W95/DOS
$49.95	04-20135	FINAL DOOM MAC*
$44.95	04-11458	GENDER WARS DOS
$49.95	04-11315	ZPC - NO FLESH SHALL BE SPARED W95*
$49.95	04-20115	ZPC - NO FLESH SHALL BE SPARED MAC*
$49.95	04-11153	HERETIC: SHADOW OF THE SERPENT RIDER DOS
$39.95	04-11154	VIKINGS: THE STRATEGY OF ULTIMATE CONQUEST W3.1/MAC
$38.95	04-10266	JUST ME AND MY DAD™ W3.1/MAC
$38.95	04-10284	JUST ME AND MY MOM™ W3.1/MAC

THE FREE LIST

SELECTION#	TITLE
04-11568	SPQR W95/W3.1**
04-20158	SPQR MAC**
04-11266	"9" W3.1
04-20113	"9" MAC
04-11316	AMOK W95/DOS*
04-11567	XS DOS*
04-20114	BEDLAM MAC
04-11265	BEDLAM W95/DOS
04-11264	SCORCHER W95/DOS**
04-11459	KINGDOM O' MAGIC DOS
04-11458	GENDER WARS DOS
04-11315	ZPC - NO FLESH WILL BE SPARED W95*
04-20115	ZPC - NO FLESH WILL BE SPARED MAC*
04-11154	VIKINGS: STRATEGY OF ULTIMATE CONQUEST W3.1/MAC
04-10266	JUST ME AND MY DAD™ W3.1/MAC
04-11789	IMPERIUM GALACTICA DOS**
04-10442	LOCUS W95/DOS
04-20059	LOCUS MAC
04-10258	ICE & FIRE W95/W3.1
04-20058	ICE & FIRE MAC

* Available October
** Available November
All others now available



Cost does not include sales tax where applicable. Not all games available on all platforms or operating systems. See game lists for details. Offer good only in Continental U.S. Allow 8-12 weeks from receipt of order for delivery. FREE offer expires January 31, 1997 or while supplies last. Availability dates subject to change.

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1. ☐ Yes! Please enter me for a chance to win GT Interactive's Game Therapy Sweepstakes. Simply complete and mail this coupon in an envelope with postage affixed to GT Interactive Software, PO Box 985, Buffalo, NY 14207 no later than January 31, 1997. (Skip to item #4 below.) No purchase necessary. See official rules below for details.

-or-

2. ☐ Please enter me for a chance to win GT Interactive's Game Therapy Sweepstakes and send me my FREE game by mail. (I've already purchased 2 games from my software retailer.) Simply choose your FREE game from the "FREE" list above. Be sure to write the item number of your selection in the space indicated below. Use the item number of your selection that corresponds to your operating system—not all games are available for every operating system. Enclose in an envelope with sufficient postage the following: (a) Proof-of-purchase (UPC bar code) for each game purchased, (b) store receipt dated between October 1, 1996 and January 31, 1997 for each game proof of purchase provided, (c) this fully completed coupon, and (d) $6.95 payment for shipping and handling of your FREE game. Mail to GT Interactive Software, PO Box 985, Buffalo, NY 14207 no later than January 31, 1997.

   My FREE game from the "FREE" list is Item Number 04-_____
   In case first choice is unavailable, please indicate: 2nd choice 04-_____ 3rd choice 04- _____

3. Shipping and handling payment ____check ____ money order ____credit card
   If paying by check, please make checks payable to GT Interactive Software. If paying by credit card, please indicate the following:

   Credit card account # _____

   Exp. date __/__ __ Visa __ MasterCard __ AMEX Signature_____

4. Required

   _____
   name address apt

   _____
   city state zip

   _____
   phone male/ female date of birth e-mail M608

5. Optional

   YOUR OPERATING SYSTEM? Mac OS™ IBM® PC W95 W3.1 MS-DOS®

   OTHER PLATFORMS OWNED? SEGA Saturn™ SONY Playstation™ NINTENDO Ultra 64™

OFFICIAL RULES
NO PURCHASE NECESSARY
1. TO ENTER: To enter the sweepstakes, you may do any of the following; (1) Purchase two games from the "Buy" list above from GT directly by calling 1-800-432-3493 ext. M607 and provide the information requested on the coupon above to the operator; or (2) Purchase two games from the "Buy" list above from any participating retail store, send us the original UPC bar code from each game, and a store receipt dated between October 1, 1996 and January 31, 1997, for each game purchased, and the completed coupon above, and mail to GT in an envelope; or (3) Complete sections 1 & 4 on the coupon above or hand print your name, address, age, telephone number, and operating system on a 3x5 post card. Send entries submitted by methods two (2) or three (3) above with proper postage affixed to GT Interactive Software Sweepstakes, P.O. Box 985, Buffalo, New York 14207. All mail entries must be postmarked by January 31, 1997, and received by February 7, 1997. No limit on mail entries, but mass entries and reproductions will be disqualified. Not responsible for lost, late, misdirected, postage due entries or entries not received in time for the random drawing. Mutilated or illegible entries will be disqualified. 2. WINNER SELECTION: Winners will be selected in a random drawing from among all eligible entries received by representatives of GT Interactive Software Corp. on or about February 14, 1997. Odds of winning depend on the total number of eligible entries received. Winners will be notified by mail on or about February 28, 1997. Winners (or the parent/guardian of winner if winner is a minor) will be required to execute, and return within fourteen (14) days of receipt, an affidavit of eligibility, release of liability, and publicity release; noncompliance within such time or the return of any notice as undeliverable, will result in disqualification and the selection of an alternate winner. Void where prohibited or restricted by law. All federal, state, and local laws and regulations apply. 3. PRIZES AND APPROXIMATE RETAIL VALUES: Twenty-five (25) winners will each receive fifteen (15) items of their choice from the "Buy List" (ARV: $600 each). Limit of one prize per person or household and no substitution or transfer of prizes by winner will be permitted. If any item is unavailable, another item of equal value will be awarded. All prizes will be awarded. 4. MISCELLANEOUS: All federal, state, and local taxes on prizes are the sole responsibility of winner. Acceptance of a prize constitutes permission to use that winner's name and/or likeness for advertising, trade purposes and promotional use without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. Not responsible for any personal or property loss or damage incurred by acceptance and/or use of prizes. All entries become the property of GT Interactive Software Corp. 5. ELIGIBILITY: Open to Continental U.S. residents only. Employees of GT Interactive Software Corp., its subsidiaries, affiliates, advertising agencies and their immediate families or members of the same household are not eligible to participate. 6. WINNER'S LIST: For a list of winners (available after March 30, 1997), send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to GT Interactive Software Sweepstakes, P.O. Box 985, Buffalo, New York 14207.



Letters

Question of the Month:
Online Gaming–Friend or Foe?

You've just joined an online gaming service. Or maybe you've been doing it for awhile. Or maybe you quit 'cause of the damn lag time. Whatever group you fall in, we want to hear your story. Give us the lowdown on your experiences with online gaming–the good, the bad, and the absolutely hideous. If you have no intention of ever joining the online gaming community, we want to hear from you, too. Write us at Letters to the Editor, PC Games, 951 Mariner's Island Blvd., Suite 700, San Mateo, CA 94404; fax us at 415-349-7482; or e-mail us at pcgameslet ters@pcgamesmag.com. Please include your full name with each letter.

Quake! Quake!! QUAKE!!!

No doubt about it, id's latest hit was still the hot topic this month. We asked you what you thought of the shareware, and you told us: it rocks! Most of you thought the game was good to great, and considered it a groundbreaking, not-quite-perfect entry in the genre. Opinions on which game was better, Duke or Quake, were a mixed bag: Some of you preferred Duke's humor, weapons, and established character, and the ability to interact with the environment. Others liked Quake's scary monsters, evil atmosphere, and truly 3D polygon effects. And a few of you loved both games so much, you tore yourself up trying to decide.

This month, we're pre-empting our Question of the Month results (they'll be back next issue) so we can share more of your comments on this first-person phenomenon.

Pans, Pokes, and Blokes

About Quake: Same shit, different flies.
Ronan Masse
Via the Internet

Quake doesn't have Duke's attitude. Big mistake.
Ilya Bossov
Winslow, ME

As one of the many avid fans of Doom, and more recently, Duke Nukem, I was anxiously awaiting an opportunity to play the full shareware version of Quake. I had read the hype about pushing the edge of the envelope and being so far ahead of the competition. What a major disappointment! The graphics are grainy; the weapons and adversaries are poorly rendered; the effects of the weapons' discharge, both aurally and visually, are not as satisfying as those in the original Doom. And what's the deal with all the puerile text messages—"You can jump here," "Shoot this door," etc.? Ahead of the competition? I don't think so. Comparing Quake to Duke is like comparing checkers to chess. I'll be holding onto my 50 bucks until Prey or a sequel to Duke is released.
Cliff Howard
Spring Valley, CA

The God of Games

The bozo who said "Quake sucks bigtime" ("Quake Feedback," September 1996) is the kind of person who has to lay down after watching one of those action-packed Bob Ross painting shows on PBS! I thought that Quake rocked the house. I loved all the weapons and the monsters. The lightning was superb.
Zach Mel
West Reading, PA

I can agree with most points in your coverage of Quake vs. Duke ("The Great Quake Debate," October 1996). As a Doomer from the start, I fell in love with Duke when it came out. I really didn't like Quake's Qtest, but when the full version was released, I was hooked. I disagree with you on the "It's Quake if he doesn't have a modem line..." part. I have an IPX network card, a 28.8 modem, and an Internet connection. I also get together with about 10 of my friends for "Doom & Quake parties," with all of us hooking up our IPX cards. The things you failed to mention were:

(1) Duke supports Internet only with Kali, so shell out another $20 for what Quake gives you free.

(2) Duke is *slow* with eight players, even on our local LAN—so slow as to be unplayable with 8 players blasting away! Quake, on the other hand, plays nicely even with 16 players on the Net (provided you find a good server).

(3) Quake *could* have the option of steroids, and ducking and flying! Due to the way it is made, you can modify Quake to have *anything*! I routinely play with modified weapons like pipebombs, gib guns, and grappling hooks! Where is this option in Duke? Sorry, you only get what they give you weaponwise!

Just a few thoughts from a serious gamer.
Joe Whipple
Columbus, OH

Duke is fun, but Quake is real. There's nothing more frightening than playing Quake in the dark with headphones and a subwoofer.
Doug Matulewic
St. Louis, MO

What I think about Quake: The graphics blow Duke away! The people swing their arms, flail around with chainsaws, and die really well, too. I never get tired of blowing

continued on page 36

ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL WILEY

PLAY DIRTY!









- Thousands of evil orcs have landed in the big city—make sure they get a rude welcome!
- Choose a dwarf (Greg, Taconac or Corthag) and one of their trusty, weapons (baseball bat, bowling pin or shotgun).
- Blast, bludgeon or seven-ten split hordes of villians in the Bronx, then rescue four genius kids taken by a sinister general.
- Alternate between the dwarves on the fly to unleash special moves or combine them for fast attacks in "brawl mode" or "morph dwarf."
- Three Dirty Dwarves delivers non-stop head smashing action with a high-energy soundtrack and a look all its own!

Three Dirty Dwarves™ for Sega Saturn™ and Windows® 95

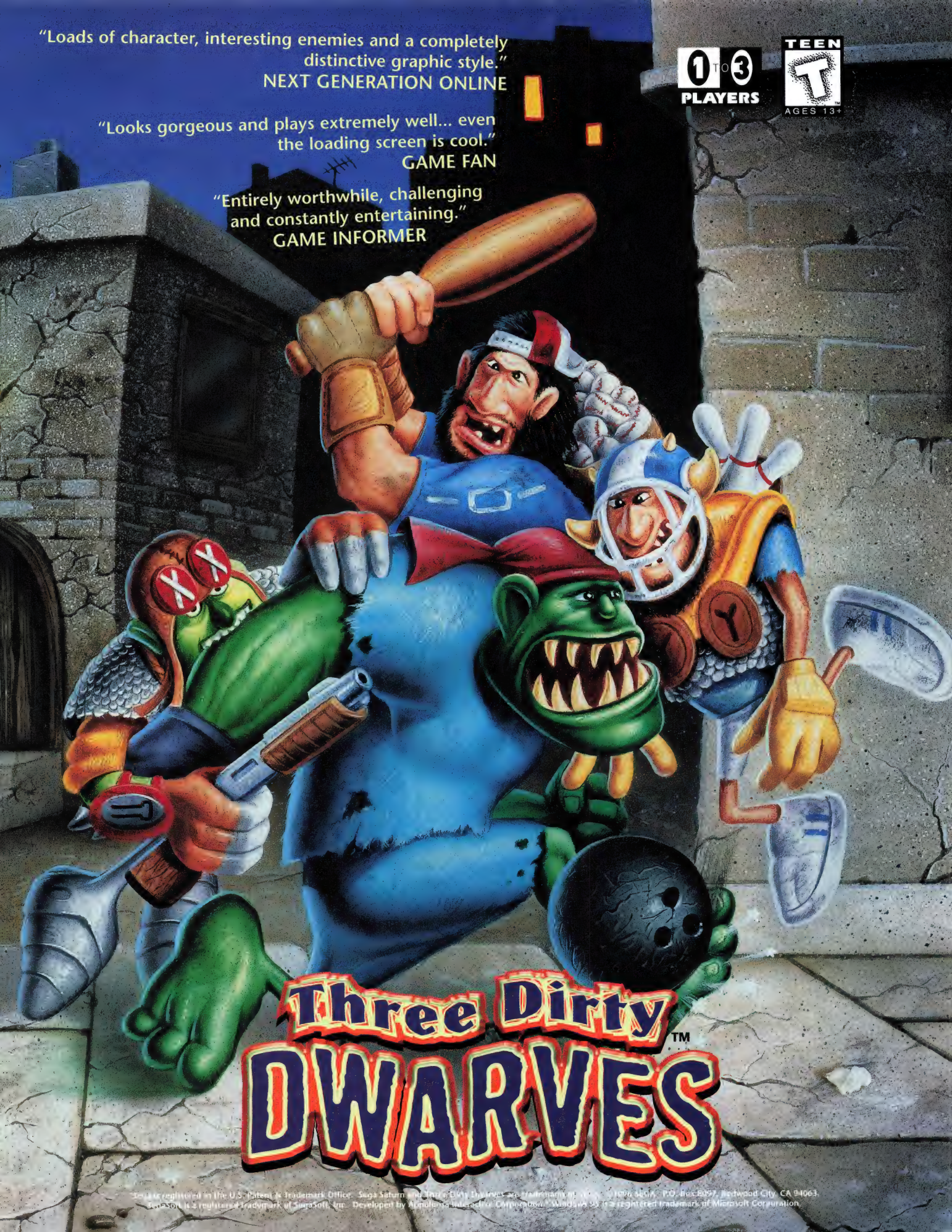
SEGA SATURN™

Designed for Microsoft® Windows® Compatible

For a free demo or to order Three Dirty Dwarves direct, call 1-888-SegaSoft • www.segasoft.com

Appaloosa Interactive

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away those rottweilers! The only things I don't like are the explosions and the blood. The explosions *suck*! All they are are a bunch of freakin' pixels. If I wanted pixels, I'd go play Wolfenstein 3D! Those blood rainbows are nice. They're so pretty I could stare at one all day, but still, it would be nice if they were rainbows of blood, not blocks. Otherwise, Quake rules!
requium1@aol.com

The Truth About Nailguns

After zipping once through the tiny levels in the Quake yawnfest, the only thing that caught my attention was the nailgun. I thought, "How many people playing this actually know what a nailgun is supposed to be?" A little history: Nailguns don't shoot the kind of nails you buy at the hardware store. Nailguns were (and probably still are) under development by the military as a weapon that shoots tiny little "flechettes," which are short pieces of titanium or stainless steel or tungsten carbide wire with little fins on the back end, making them look sort of like nails. Firing these "nails" at speeds in excess of 5,000 feet per second and rates of up to 5,000 rounds per minute has so far proved to produce too much heat, friction, and wear for state-of-the-art barrels to withstand long enough to be practical—or so they say.

Propulsion systems have ranged from careless solid explosives to various flammable compressed gasses to the dreamland of superdense metallic hydrogen. Squirt a cubic millimeter of metallic hydrogen into a chamber, let the pressure off, and BOOM! extreme-velocity "nails." The only problem with this process is that it currently requires several tons of expensive equipment to produce a fraction of a cubic millimeter of metallic hydrogen. Firing such "nails" into flesh at such high speeds theoretically produces large amounts of hydrostatic shock that does more damage than the standard 7.62mm NATO bullets.

I hope this clears things up a bit for everyone.
Gregg Shelman
Via the Internet

Whoops

Aieee! We accidentally ran the wrong rules for the AMOK contest in last month's issue. For correct rules, see page 18.

Quake Contest Winners

Even jaded gamers can crack a smile sometimes, and this time, we have you to thank. More than 250 of you wowed us with your amazing stories explaining the origins of Quake's title. Whether you wrote of Mayan gods, time travel, or apocalyptic earthquakes, or told us what QUAKE stood for (our favorite was Sean Kane's Quickly Usurping and Killing Everything), the majority of you showed a lot more imagination than id's idiotic backstory. Here's the breakdown on the winning tales:

Micky Hingorani
Fanwood, NJ
After inadvertently giving his Joseph Stalin godlike power, an alternate-reality Albert Einstein helps us mobilize our troops against Stalin's mutant armies...

Andy Modeen
Kent, WA
The stories of Wolfenstein, Doom, and Quake meet head-on as the descendant of the Doomed space marine and B.J. Blazkowicz joins the fight against the forces of Hell...

Ben Roberts
Concord, MA
Quake was originally "Quack," a tale of a chicken desperately trying to fit into a ducks' world...

Chris Sequeira
Vancouver, British Columbia
In 8798, the last survivor of a fiery holocaust vows revenge against the evil that took his family...

Dan Williams
Virginia Beach, VA
A dying soldier gives you a journal revealing the secrets of the slipgates–and your dire mission: prevent an invasion by subterranean demons...

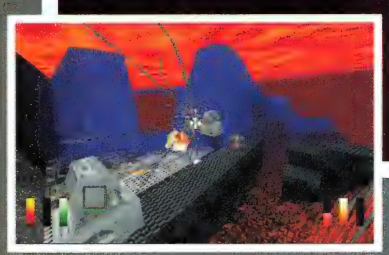
Each of the winners will receive a free copy of Quake, signed by the guys at id. For a look at their stories, check out our Web site, www.pcgamesmag.com. Thanks again to everyone who entered!

Microsoft
Where do you want to go today?™

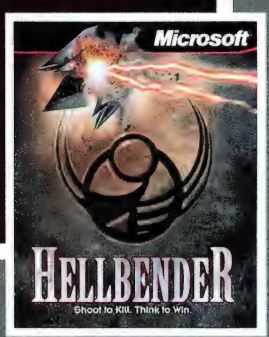


MY MIND IS MY WEAPON.

Questions in my mind are my most incisive ally. How vigilantly I choose my objectives to achieve my mission. How I fly with finite accuracy through ballistic onslaughts. How I reap a plethora of new weapons in the midst of a multiplayer Hell' fight via the Internet. How I deal with the graphic realism through 8 mysterious worlds intensified with Direct 3D. Even when my thoughts sanction adrenaline charges to my trigger finger. A mind that questions itself can be a good thing. A mind that questions nothing will get you killed. Read and remember, your mind is your most potent weapon and I've just reloaded yours.

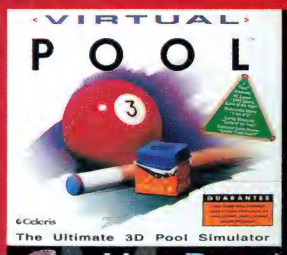


Fly trial version at
www.microsoft.com/games/hellbender/



KIDS TO ADULTS
K-A
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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Virtual Pool from MacPlay has all the angles and shots of the real game — and then some. Features 4 great pool games, full-motion-video library, realistic physics and geometry, easy multiplayer modes, realistic 3-D perspective and graphics plus a musical jukebox.

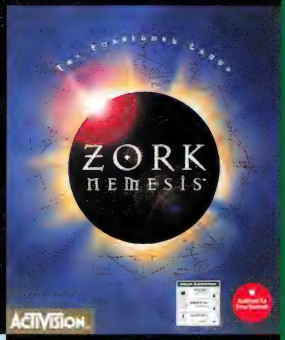


Five hundred years ago, Europe's conquering heroes pursued dreams of a new world. MacPlay's Conquest of the New World is a strategy game where you command explorers, settlers and mercenary soldiers as they discover a new world and build the ultimate nation.

You Don't Know Jack, Volume 2, is the hilarious sequel to the original award-winning game. This Jack comes complete with 800 all-new questions, new question types, celebrity guest appearances, new features and more. From Berkeley Systems.



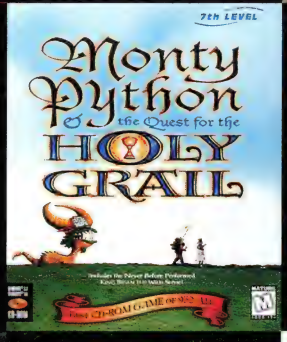
In Zork Nemesis, you're beckoned to the Forbidden Lands, a cursed world occupied only by the tortured spirits trapped there. Travel through 5 mind-bending worlds to discover the ancient secret of alchemy that will free the trapped souls from evil's grip. From Activision.



Is that the

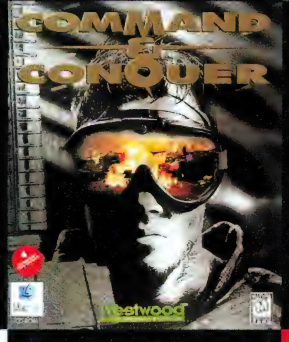


MacSoft's Terminal Velocity offers fast 3-D texture-mapped graphics, full 360-degree flight movement and 7 weapons of extraordinary destruction as you fight your way through 9 unique planets with an awesome array of air-to-air and air-to-ground combat action.



The best CD-ROM game of 932 A.D.— Monty Python and the Quest for the Holy Grail from 7th Level, Inc. It will take you on a romp through King Arthur's England, uncovering clues, solving puzzles and playing wholesome games like "Burn the Witch" and "Spank the Virgin."

Westwood Studios' Command and Conquer takes you into a gritty, high-tech world where the art of electronic intelligence and covert surveillance reigns supreme. Where guerrilla strategies and savage combat are the norm. Muster forces and lacerate your enemies to the bone.



Tank Commander by Eidos Interactive slams you into the cockpit of an M1 Abrams tank as you test your split-second-decision skills against enemy tanks in over 25 fully textured missions. Destroy T-72, Leopard and Challenger tanks with over 7 weapons.





With its incredibly realistic flight models, 3-D photo-realistic landscapes and the use of real-world physics, Flight Unlimited re-creates the most accurate sensation of aerobatic flying ever experienced on the Macintosh. For best results, play before lunch.



Origin Systems' Wing Commander IV is one of the latest space-combat games for the Mac. Take on the role of Colonel Blair, played by Mark Hamill in breathtaking space battles and heart-pounding drama, as you fight your way through the most spectacular Wing Commander yet.

Get ready for the biggest adrenaline rush of the holiday season. We're talking new games for the Mac.® We're also talking sweaty palms. Heart-pounding exhilaration. Stomach-in-the-throat thrills — the works. And here's the best part: with thousands of titles to choose from, you may never come down from that gaming high. Piqued your interest? Good.

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smell of chestnuts burning? Or just your neurological receptors going into overdrive?



So now you're probably wondering how to get your twitching fingers on these games. Just visit stores like CompUSA, Staples, Micro Center and Fry's Electronics. Or, flip through any Mac mail-order catalogs. Or, hop on the Net. But no matter where you go to find them, remember to look for the smiling Mac OS logo. (All great software wears this face.™) If you're ready to take your adrenal glands on the ultimate ride, visit www.macsoftware.apple.com. And learn more about games for your Macintosh® and how to find them. Of course, if you want to, you can always use a phone: **call 800-500-4862**.

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Online Gaming Luminaries Circle Jupiter



Sony leaps into the online gaming arena via its Station site, which is expected to be launched late this year.

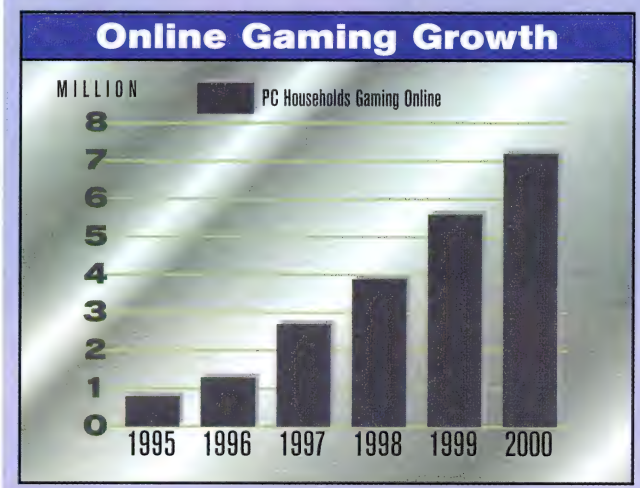
SAN FRANCISCO—Everyone who's anyone in the online gaming world went to Jupiter in September.

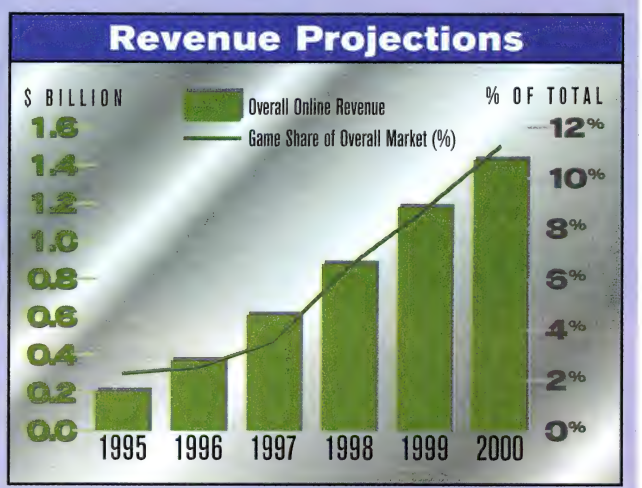
No, not the planet. Market-research firm Jupiter Communications hosted the Online Developers Conference III, with day one focusing on multiplayer online gaming. While many panelists and speakers shied away from addressing the myriad issues in the online gaming world and instead used the conference as a demo platform, several themes did emerge.

Pricing models were strongly debated. Jupiter presented its *Online and Internet Games Report* and asserted that the flat-fee model is prevalent now but pay-per-play looms. Content providers and "aggregators"—firms like Aries Online Games (formerly Kesmai, see next page) who acquire games and repackage them for online services and ISPs—argued that a pay-per-play model is the only one that works. Flat-fee pricing tends to cost the online gaming companies in the long run, the argument went, because hardcore users spend too much time on the service, while infrequent users see the flat fee as a barrier and either don't sign up or quickly cancel.

Of course, it's the consumers who will ultimately decide which pricing model works, and new services such as Mpath's Mplayer and Total Entertainment Network (TEN) will try to cover all the bases with combination pricing. TEN's pricing remains the same:

Jupiter Communications' *Online and Internet Games Report* predicts 7.2 million household PCs will be used for online gaming by the year 2000. That will boost online revenues to $1.6 billion, with gaming accounting for 11.2 percent of those revenues.



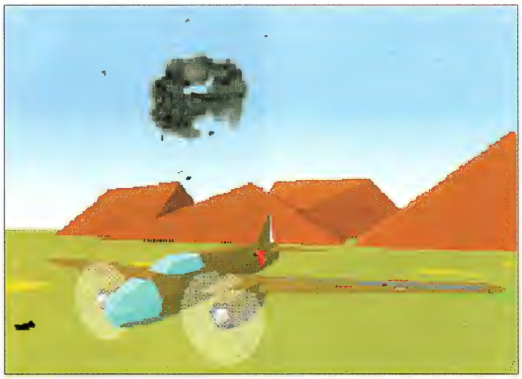




According to Sony, more than 3,000 people per day have been playing the beta version of Wheel of Fortune—even without Vanna.

The first 25,000 people to sign up pay $14.95 for unlimited play or $4.95 a month for five hours with each additional hour at $0.95. There's a $0.95 surcharge for using TEN's direct connection versus your own ISP.

Mpath has yet to release pricing or launch details, although representatives said Mplayer will be officially launched and charging by the time you read this. Fees will be "under $2 an hour," and there will be 15- and 30-hour bulk packages and a free trial period.



Listen up, flyboy: Air Warrior will now be distributed by Aries Online Games.

It became clear at the conference that no matter what pricing model is used, online gaming services will supplement their revenues with advertising. Interactive Imaginations showed it in practice with its Riddler site (**www.riddler.com**), which is completely funded by targeted advertising and does not charge its members.

Advertising is a natural for online gaming sites because people tend to stay at a site for hours at a time, giving ads time to make an impression. It's likely that ads will go beyond banners to include tie-ins and sponsorships.

"Think of special events sponsored by online advertising," said Brian Apgar, founder and executive vice president of Mpath. "Those special events could be tournaments, or even a scenario like 'Tonight's play is free thanks to Nike or Coca-Cola.'"

Other interesting news and tidbits from the conference:

• Sony is throwing its hat into the online multiplayer arena with **Station@Sony.com**, a site that'll feature made-for-online twitch games and game shows. BattleGround, a tank combat game with room for 1,000 simultaneous users in 30 different arenas, will be the first action offering. Station will include another twitch game as well as Jeopardy!, Wheel of Fortune, and The Dating Game. The site should be up before Christmas. Pricing is still being worked out, said Matt Rothman, senior vice president and general manager of Sony Online Ventures, but it's likely that entering tournaments for the game shows will cost between $2 and $5, while BattleGround play will be around $1 to $3 an hour. The site will have advertising and leverage Sony's other business units by offering albums, PlayStation games, movie tickets, and other Sony products as prizes.

• Kesmai Corp. is spinning out two companies. Aries Online Games will distribute and publish Kesmai and third-party game content to online services and ISPs, while Kesmai Studios will develop online game content. Kesmai Corp. becomes a holding company. The new Aries just inked a deal with The Discovery Channel for Watchword, a "Boggle or Scrabble"-type word game. Aries is also in the final rounds of negotiations with Accolade for a "major sports title," said Sheryl Gatto, Aries vice president. Neither company would say what the title is, but it's likely to be the forthcoming Jack Nicklaus Golf 4.

• America Online's 32-bit client for Windows 95 is expected by Christmas.

• Quick—which online multiplayer game is played more than 500,000 hours per month? Simutronics' GemStone III, available on America Online and CompuServe, is the text-based RPG racking up all the hours.

—*Willem Knibbe*



REBELLION

THE STAR WARS STRATEGY GAME

Lucas' Real-Time Rebellion

LucasArts will enter the real-time strategy genre early next year with **Rebellion**, a C&C-type game set in the *Star Wars* universe.

For noble types playing the Rebel Alliance, the goal is to overthrow the Imperial Seat at Coruscant or capture Darth Vader or The Emperor. Those fighting for the Dark Side of the Force win by destroying Rebel headquarters or capturing Luke Skywalker or Mon Mothma.



Check out this cut scene from Rebellion, a real-time strategy game to be released in the first quarter.

The types of weapons, vehicles, and troops, as well as the number of missions, weren't available at press time. LucasArts wouldn't elaborate on multiplayer capabilities either, except to say that Rebellion was strictly a one-on-one game.

The company is taking a cautious approach with all its online multiplayer plans. While such heavy hitters as Sierra, id Software, 3D Realms, and Westwood Studios have signed deals for their games to appear on multiplayer online gaming services such as TEN or Mpath, LucasArts is evaluating business models and technical issues before making any final decisions.

"The plans are to take existing content and do what we can to bring it to these different providers," said Steve Dauterman, LucasArts director of production. "Longer-term, we may establish our own multiplayer-gaming Web site."

So who's going to be that lucky provider?

"We're talking with all of them," Dauterman said. "We have no plans for an exclusive deal with anyone; we haven't set anything in stone. The first games we're looking at are X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter and Outlaws going onto their services."

Jedi Knight, the highly anticipated sequel to Dark Forces, is also a natural, Dauterman said, but at the moment there is no roll-out plan or schedule in place for any of LucasArts' games to hit the wires. *—Willem Knibbe*

scouting REPORT

Industry Layoffs

Acclaim Entertainment reduced the workforce at its Long Island headquarters, laying off approximately 20 percent of its 342 full-time staff and announcing more layoffs at offices around the world. The company says the move is part of a "cost-management initiative" designed to return Acclaim to "consistent profitability."

It wasn't the only major publisher announcing layoffs. Viacom New Media said that 70 employees at its New York offices would be affected by the company's consolidation with Virgin Interactive Entertainment.

DVD's Maiden Voyage

It's official—the first playback of a DVD-ROM game on a computer was announced September 18 by Optical Disc Corporation (ODC), which had authored the four-disc, all-video game Silent Steel onto a single Digital Versatile Disc. Tsunami Media's submarine game made the conversion to DVD in less than a day, and the finished disc holds all 4.7GB of the original in remastered form.

3DO Shifts Focus to PCs

Giving up on the console market that it was once predicted to dominate, 3DO announced that it is shifting its focus primarily to the PC and Internet-gaming markets, licensing or selling off most of its hardware interests to concentrate on software development.

For Real: GT Nabs Unreal

GT Interactive tightened its chokehold on the 3D-action market by acquiring the exclusive distribution rights to the upcoming shooter Unreal. The deal with Epic MegaGames includes sequel rights and translations onto

continued on page 44

The Top 10 PC Game Companies

Sierra On-Line and Electronic Arts remain on top of the gaming world, accounting for more than 20 percent of the dollars spent on PC games. GT Interactive, on a serious acquisitions spree in 1996, is moving up the ladder. Here are the top 10 game publishers for the first half of 1996, according to market research firm PC Data. The first number represents each company's share of the total dollars spent on games; the second number represents the company's percentage of market share based on number of units sold.

Rank	Company	$ Percentage	Unit Percentage
1.	Sierra On-Line	12.37	10.41
2.	Electronic Arts	8.49	7.6
3.	GT Interactive	7	7.43
4.	LucasArts	5.72	4.62
5.	Virgin	4.78	4.15
6.	Microsoft	4.71	4.07
7.	MicroProse	4.7	3.88
8.	Interplay	4.59	3.93
9.	Davidson & Associates	4.2	3.42
10.	Activision	3.84	3.06



Microsoft's Internet Gaming Zone will remain free after Zone users overwhelmingly endorsed an ad-supported site rather than a subscription or pay-per-play model.

Microsoft Hones Zone Strategy

A month ago, Microsoft was in the evaluation stage of its recently acquired Internet Gaming Zone and seemed content to let it be a "classic games" multiplayer site. But hey, it's Microsoft. The industry giant is done evaluating and—surprise, surprise—it wants to dominate another market.

"The goal of the Zone is to be the place to go for online games," said Jon Grande, product planner for Microsoft's NetGames Group.

And we're not just talking Hearts and Checkers. Hellbender and Monster Truck Madness are the Zone's first retail titles, and Close Combat and Golf should be available when you read this. The off-the-shelf offerings won't be limited to Microsoft's games, either. Grande said he is talking with all major publishers about putting titles on the Zone.

Microsoft's three-pronged strategy is to have the best "mass-market social" games (Chess, Bridge, etc.), high-end online-only offerings, and match-making for retail games.

"We don't want to go head-to-head with Mpath and TEN...right now," Grande said. More content and a strong marketing plan need to be in place first, he added.

Microsoft is putting bucks behind the banter. The site, which currently has about 50,000 users, recently received a facelift. Microsoft also hired Tetris creator Alexey Pajitnov to help develop games for the Zone.

The Internet Gaming Zone is at **www.zone.com** or **igz2.microsoft.com**. You must have an ActiveX-compatible browser (read: Internet Explorer 3.0) to play Monster Truck Madness and Hellbender. Microsoft said it is working to make all Zone games compatible with all browsers.

—Willem Knibbe



In addition to Hellbender and Monster Truck Madness, Microsoft will add several more retail titles to its lineup of "classic" games.

RELOADED
www.reloaded.com
reason #: 999!
Role Playing My Ass- Where Do I Shoot?
splatter your screen!

scouting REPORT

the PlayStation, Saturn, and Nintendo 64. GT says Unreal should be out on the PC in the first half of 1997. (GT Interactive; 800-610-4847; www.gtinteractive.com)

ATI Announces 3D Pro Turbo PC2TV

ATI Technologies announced the newest member of its line of accelerator cards, the 3D Pro Turbo PC2TV. Featuring ImpacTV, a companion chip to the 3D Rage II accelerator, the new card will allow for direct output to big-screen TVs and monitors. It will also provide for television output from PCs and video editing by digital video export to VCRs. (ATI Technologies; 905-882-2600; www.atitech.ca/; $199)

EarthLink Wires The Arena

Internet service provider EarthLink launched The Arena, an area where gamers can play the online offerings from such services as Aries Online Games (formerly Kesmai), Engage, and the Imagination Network. "We're building an aggregation of [game content] aggregators," said Brad Sobel, EarthLink's director of online games. "The Arena will be open to anyone on the Net, but you get a discount on the hourly rate if you use EarthLink." The Arena will let gamers play the offerings from these services but will simplify billing by presenting only one bill from one company. Hourly rates are $2.25 for EarthLink customers and $2.75 for everyone else. Users can also purchase 25-, 50-, and 100-hour blocks. EarthLink is currently talking to Mpath, Total Entertainment Network, Simutronics, and NTN Communications about making their content available in The Arena, which is located at **www.earthlink.net/thearena**.

Papyrus Vets Enter 5th Dimension



Take a swig with this character from 5D Games' G-Zero.

Following the well-beaten path from large development houses, five Papyrus employees have left the Sierra On-Line subsidiary to form 5D Games. It's a Hollywood-style trend in the games industry now, with such established firms as id Software, MicroProse, and 3D Realms recently saying sayonara to top talent.

"I don't have an explanation for the trend, but it's a natural thing that happens when you have consolidation," said Todd Farrington, president of 5D and former IndyCar II producer. "Maybe it's resistance to that. We didn't leave because everyone else did, though. We wanted to have creative freedom, and we didn't want to do racing games forever."

Farrington and the rest of the 5D Games crew were a bit secretive about their first project, code-named G-Zero.

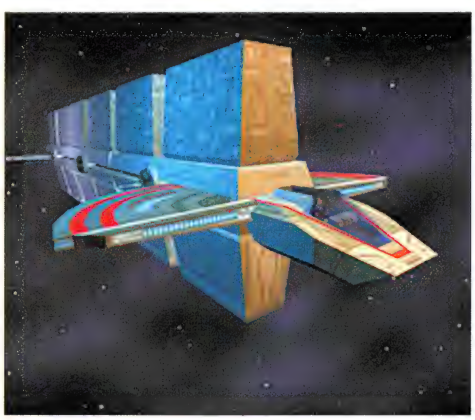
"We haven't seen this game out there and haven't seen anyone talking about it," Farrington said. "Part of its big value is the idea, so we want to pique interest by gradually uncovering what the plan is."

He did say it's a space game in a true 3D environment with action and strategy elements. "It's absolutely real-time, heavy 3D—3D sound, 3D physics. Think of space flight. Big universe, many worlds. Space stations, faster-than-light travel."

It's being constructed as a multiplayer game from the get-go, and it's a "serverless" game: If the host's machine goes down, the next player's machine takes over as the server. Farrington also says they're doing some smart programming to deal with Internet latency issues.

G-Zero should be out late next year. (5D Games; 508-777-8088; www.5dgames.com)

—Willem Knibbe



One of the many ships in G-Zero.

Quakeworld Hits The Net

id Software jumped squarely into the realm of Internet gaming with the September unveiling of Quakeworld, a free online deathmatching environment devoted to the wildly popular action game.

Quakeworld provides owners of the registered version of Quake with on-line competition, individual and team rankings, stats, and verified global bragging rights if you're the best. No more going on Usenet to tell the world how great you are; now there are numbers to either back you up or blow your cover.

The freeware for servers is downloadable from id's Web site at **www.idsoftware.com**. Installing it connects that server with id's master servers, which log all the data from the fragfests. Quakeworld's worldwide statistical/ranking database can include records like most frags per minute, longest uninterrupted Quake match, and cruelest to newbies.

Quakeworld has been the main focus of the Quake team's attentions since the completion of the game, the company said. id's programming resources have been devoted to optimizing Quake for Internet play in an effort to create online deathmatches that don't suffer from the lags and lethargy of most online action gaming, id said.

–Daniel Morris

Sounds Like 3D

Several audio companies have claimed their two-speaker systems can deliver true 3D "surround sound" effects on your PC. Current 3D audio technologies include QSound, SRS, and Spatializer, which are featured in the product lineups of many major speaker-makers, including Labtec and Altec Lansing. However, while each of these technologies has delivered a fuller sound, none has truly delivered on the two-speaker surround-sound promise.

That could change with a new 3D audio technology from a relatively small company called Aureal Semiconductor.

The Fremont, Calif.-based firm has announced the VSP901 Virtual Surround Processor, which lets a single pair of speakers play Dolby Pro Logic–encoded surround soundtracks.

So should you believe Aureal's statement when so many others have failed to meet such claims? Well, probably not yet. Aureal has just made evaluation boards available for hardware and software developers, and sample silicon is just now becoming available, which means VSP901 products won't be out until the middle of next year.

However, Aureal demonstrated the VSP901 for us on a PC running a flight-sim-like virtual reality program–and it rocked. An onscreen helicopter buzzed by our virtual shoulders. We wanted to turn our heads to follow the sound buzzing around us in a full 360-degree circle. Even more impressive, the sound didn't appear to be coming from the two speakers. That's because Aureal's technology works by projecting sound into virtual space–where you'd traditionally place the five speakers that make up a typical home surround-sound theater.

Imagine this technology applied to games like Quake–you could hear monsters creeping up behind you and spin around to take them out. Cool, eh?

According to Aureal, the VSP901 will allow sound card–makers to offer cards comparable to Creative Lab's AWE32–but with 3D sound–for around $100, perhaps as early as the middle of next year. Diamond Multimedia and Oak Technologies are currently looking at using the VSP901, and Aureal expects to announce more hardware partners soon. Keep your ears open.

–Steve Klett

Gamers' Little Helpers

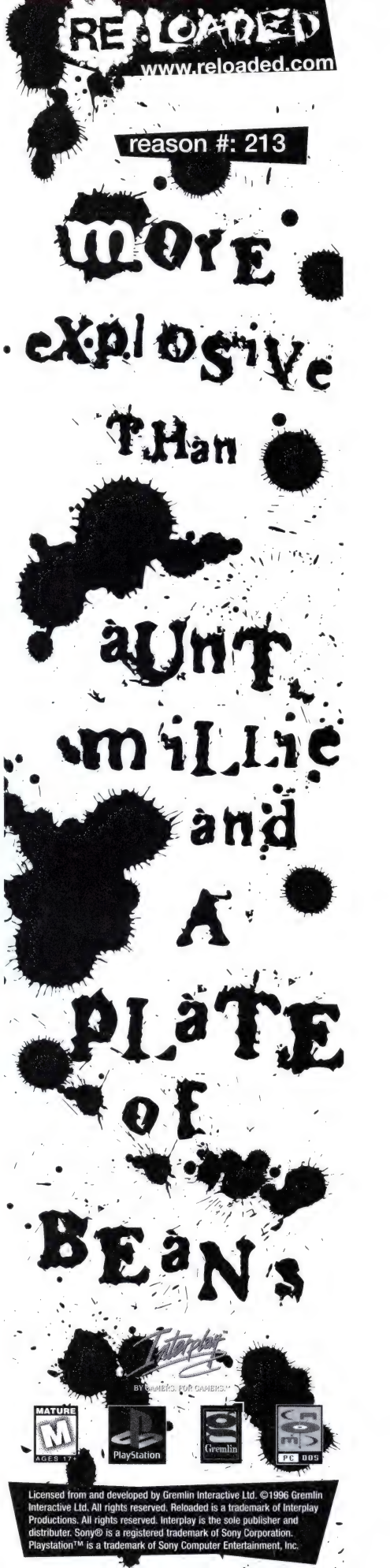
Come holiday time, your wallet's bound to look a little on the thin side. But that doesn't mean you can't treat yourself to some nifty gaming accessories. For just a few bones–and sometimes, none at all–you can pick up some of the latest utilities for your PC.

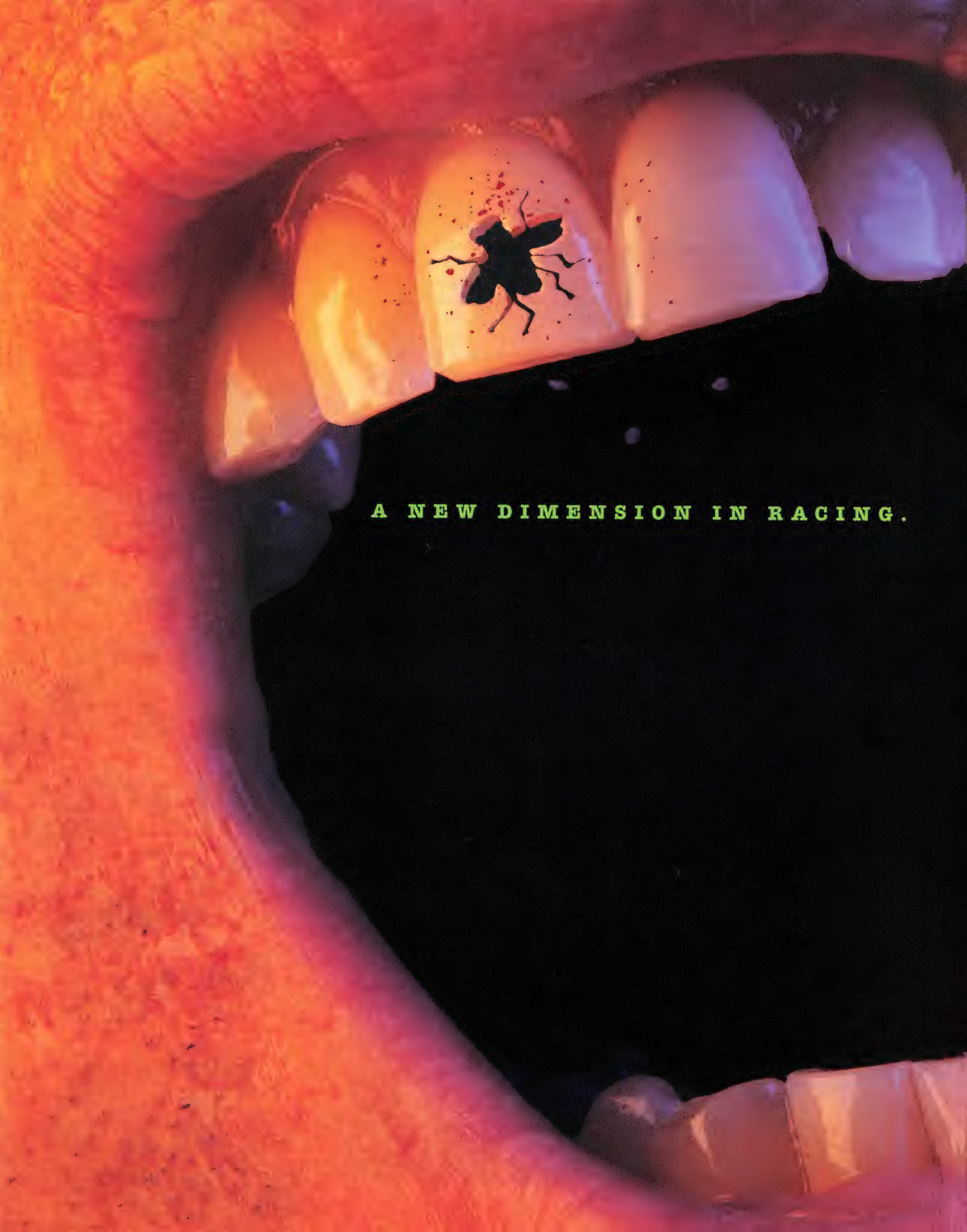
Many of these newer shareware programs are surprisingly useful, for even the most techno-illiterate gamers. Keep hitting the Windows key every time you're blasting the hell out of spaceborn scum? Check out Microsoft's DOSWINKY. With just a few simple steps, this freeware device driver lets you disable the Windows logo key when you're running MS-DOS programs in a window. You know what that means–no more lame excuses in multiplayer games.

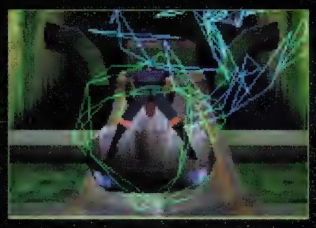
Other utilities let you get the most out of your expensive game gear. SciTech's Display Doctor, a collection of programs that fix many of the most common problems associated with Super VGA graphics cards, is a cheap way to maximize performance on graphics-heavy games. You get a 21-day evaluation period of the $34.95 Display Doctor (which incorporates UniVBE, formerly a standalone product). It automatically detects your graphics card, makes it compatible with the latest Video Electronic Standards Association (VESA) standards, fixes bugs, and generally increases the performance of all software that uses VESA BIOS Extension (VBE) standards. That's a big help with games like Quake and Duke, which rely on the latest VESA graphics standards for optimal performance at high resolutions.

We've saved you the trouble of finding DOSWINKY and the Display Doctor–they're both on this month's *PC Games* CD-ROM. You can also get them from **www.microsoft.com/windows/download/doswinky.exe** and **www.scitechsoft.com**, respectively. If you're curious about other shareware utilities, you may want to visit Shareware.com (**www.shareware.com**), Jumbo! (**www.jumbo.com**), and other sites that compile game-related programs. Happy hunting.

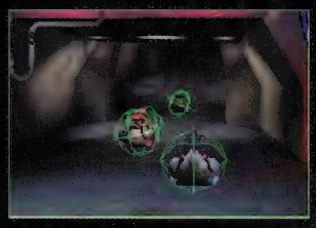
–Corey Cohen



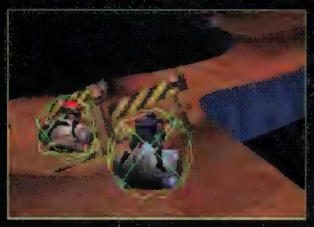

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Steve Klett

Write on!

Seeing as it's the holiday season and all, The Player thought he'd start yet another tradition with this month's column: The First Annual Reader Tribute.

What's that, you ask? Simple—it's the time The Player gives the proper thanks to all the loyal readers who have kept *PC Games*' mailbox and e-mail bin so full over the past year.

So, you think that sounds a bit dull, do you? Well, read on. [*Editor's note: The following letters and excerpts from letters are real, and, except for one instance, their authors' names and addresses have been withheld for their own good.*]

This first letter is perhaps the single best piece of mail The Player has read all year, and therefore, is presented verbatim, in its entirety:



Dear PC Games,
My daughter, age 8, chose a PC Games *subscription from a list of school fundraising options. I don't know how many issues have been sent to this address, but I want you to CANCEL THIS SUBSCRIPTION IMMEDIATELY!*
This publication is repulsively graphic, violent, immoral, and thoroughly inappropriate for minds of any age, let alone children.
I suggest you put a copy in safekeeping for a couple years, then put it on your coffee table to encourage your impressionable young sons and daughters to absorb the filth. If that doesn't bother you, that alone should tell you something. There are many more efforts worthy of your talents; I hope you grow to realize that. –Sincerely, Name withheld

A well-versed and thought-out slam! The Player should be ashamed, but instead, he's thinking, "Hmmm…I wonder if she'd write a review for us…"

But seriously, while The Player thinks this irate reader could use a good Quake deathmatch, he does agree with most of her sentiment. *PC Games* is not a magazine for 8-year-old girls—or 8-year-old boys, for that matter—and probably should never be put out on a coffee table for the younger set to get their hands on, let alone subscribe to.

PC Games is not a surrogate parent, a fact applauded by child welfare agencies everywhere. We're just gaming fanatics with a passion for sharing our enthusiasm with other fanatics. We believe it's up to Mr. & Mrs. America to protect their children from us until they're old enough to understand that we represent entertainment, not a lifestyle. The Player takes the above letter as a sign that *PC Games* is hitting the right chord with its audience.

'Nuff said—time to get off the soapbox. So what's this reader get for her outstanding letter of the year? A lifetime subscription to the magazine, of course! Just kidding.

Next up is a submission for our September Rewrite Quake History contest, in which readers where invited to supply a story for Quake, as id so thoughtfully left one out.

This awesome, earth-shaking, ass-kicking, blood-gushing, one hell of a gory game is called Quake because its power is so strong it can blow your damn ass off! Incinerate your damn body into pieces, and pump your ass full of nails!!!…It could just use some more neudity (sic)!

Now, The Player suspects this guy is unemployed. What do you say, id—will you hire him to supply Quake II's story? No? Stay in school, Beavis, at least long enough to learn how to spell nudity.

The following response is to The Player's October column, "The Great Quake Debate," which asked which game is better: Duke or Quake.

I think Quake is a very sucky game. Duke is the one that kicks ass not shitty Quake. Quake sucks so bad some people say it is a big pile of shit I think it is to (sic)…Duke is the nuke and Quake is the popper.

Er, thanks for the feedback, Butt-head. It's nice to know both you and Beavis are reading.

OK, enough about Quake (though The Player has received enough material to fill a CD-ROM). Now for some self-serving PR:

Hello Player, this is your No. 1 fan again….could you possibly have my name and e-mail mentioned in the next issue of PC Games*? That's not a bad idea for your magazine—every month you could have people publish e-mail addresses. Please, I need someone to talk to! Please!!! Writ (sic) back soon!* —Bradryan@juno.com

No problem, Brad. (Please, someone e-mail this lonely gamer.) Why do I think Brad will live to regret this request?

Now, just to keep with the holiday spirit and prove The Player's not an absolute Scrooge:

Do you think you could get me a free copy of C&C? My Dad said that times are tough and we're not going to be able to get anything extra for a very long time—possibly 10 months. Please do what you can. I'll find a way to pay you back.

No problem. Provided this writer sends us an address, a free game is "in the mail." See, The Player's not afraid to show his sensitive side. But before all you deviants out there think to play me for a sucker and write for your own free games, you'll have to wait till next year, 'cuz The Player only plays Santa once a year.

Keep those letters coming!

The Player welcomes your thoughts, criticisms, and musings at Sklett@pcgamesmag.com.

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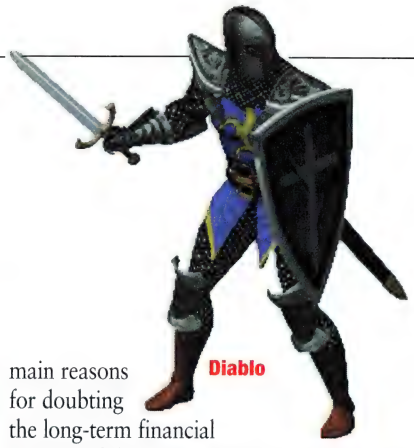
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Blade



Diablo

Pay to Play: No Way

Known only as Blade in the online world, The Opponent eats, sleeps, dreams, and breathes online gaming. When he's not kicking someone's ass on some distant Quake server or whopping a poor Duke challenger on TEN, he's talking about kicking someone's ass online. So what could we do but welcome his monthly insight in *PC Games* as our new online columnist? Read on—if you dare...



TEN



Mplayer

The Opponent loves online games—all of them. Computer-controlled adversaries just can't provide the sublime qualities of real people. That's the key to the future of PC gaming.

I was in TEN's Duke beta-testing clique for months, swearing like a trooper on numerous occasions as I got smoked due to lag rather than my own inabilities. But I kept going back. I kept seeing the improvements with each upgrade. And nothing in the gaming world could top the sheer buzz from dealing out death to hapless newbies.

As a veteran of LAN C&C battles, I was drawn to Mplayer, where four-player games ran as well as you could ask for. But Duke always pulled me back to TEN. And then there was Quake. Debates have raged long and hard about which game's better, but in the long run, the most played of the two could boil down to pure economics. Duke is great and is exclusively on TEN. During beta testing, it was also free; now, it's not. The Opponent is in the privileged position of not having to pay for these services so will no doubt make frequent—nay, too frequent—visits over the coming months. What about the rest of you? Are you prepared to pay $30 a month to play Duke (and other 3D Realms releases for the next five years)?



The Opponent reckons that there are far fewer people ready to pay up than TEN, Mpath, and Engage expect. One of the main reasons for doubting the long-term financial security of these companies—who have admittedly made bold steps forward in the quality of online gaming—is the emergence of software companies' own free online gaming servers.

What better example than id Software's proposed Quakeworld? When the patch software is finally released, all servers running Quake deathmatches will connect with id's servers and pass on information about who's on, who's hot, and who's not. Quakeworld will be the source of all the "official" rankings and sponsored events.

More importantly, it's going to be free. Both TEN and Mpath have made a big deal over having Quake available on their services, but what are they going to offer to make paying that entry fee worthwhile? What about top-quality connections? With only six or eight players, the lag times are going to be fairly decent. But one of the beauties of Quake is the ability to have up to 16 possessed lunatics hurtling—or stuttering—through their paces before turning into chunks of dog food.

Perhaps the way it will turn out is that the obsessed, hard-core, high-tech, rabid Quake players (of which there are many) will go official and suffer the lag penalties for the challenge of the 16-player battle. That will leave the more casual games player to the online services, for those who want a bit of variety in their gaming.

One of the hottest games out there is still Warcraft II. That's going to get the online treatment through Blizzard's battle.net, as is the hotly anticipated role-playing adventure Diablo. With the original Warcraft still pulling hits on TEN and Mplayer, will the services become sad parodies of their lofty intentions—the place to play games everyone else was pining over a year ago?

Meanwhile, Activision is a major player in the process of developing a server setup for NetStorm, a strategy/action game that, while currently up-and-running in-house, won't reach the shelves until next summer. NetStorm is one of many online-only games that, once bought, will only involve paying the standard ISP charges to play.

Where does that leave TEN, Mplayer, and Engage? Scrabbling for the scraps. All the online services are going to need their own equivalent of Duke to encourage The Opponent to make frequent visits. The future of gaming could leave some casualties in its wake.

Fancy a duel with The Opponent? Look out for PCG Blade on TEN and Mplayer. Send comments of any nature to blade@pcgamesmag.com.

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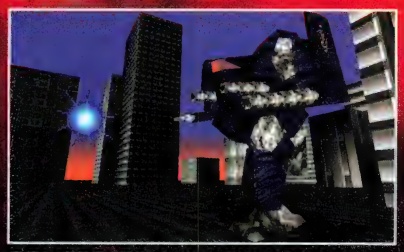
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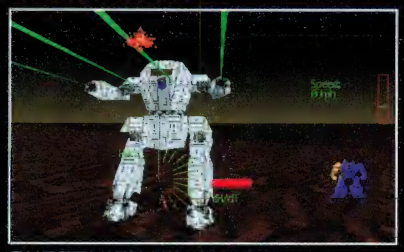
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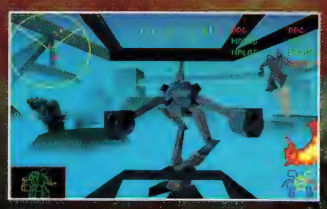
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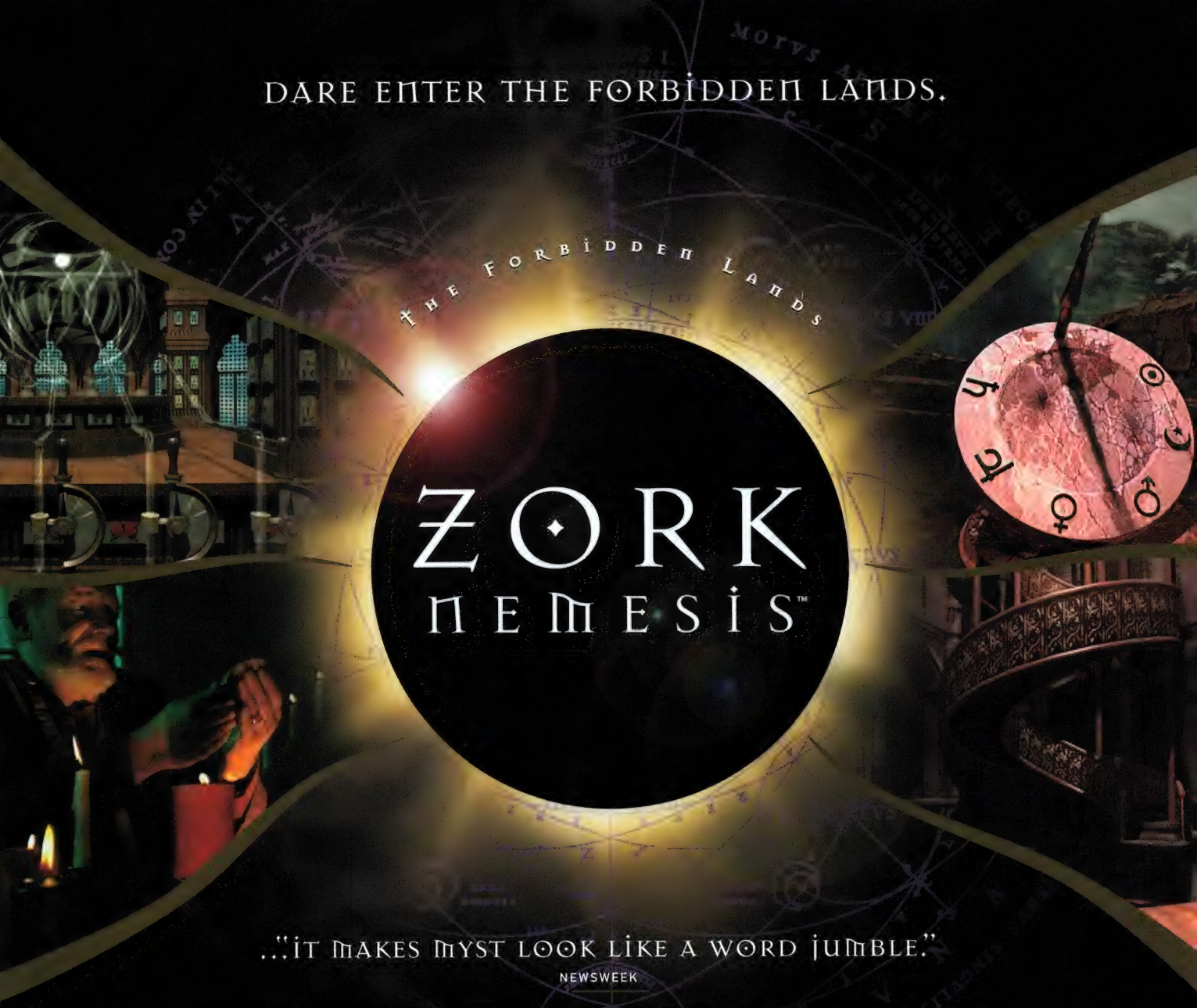
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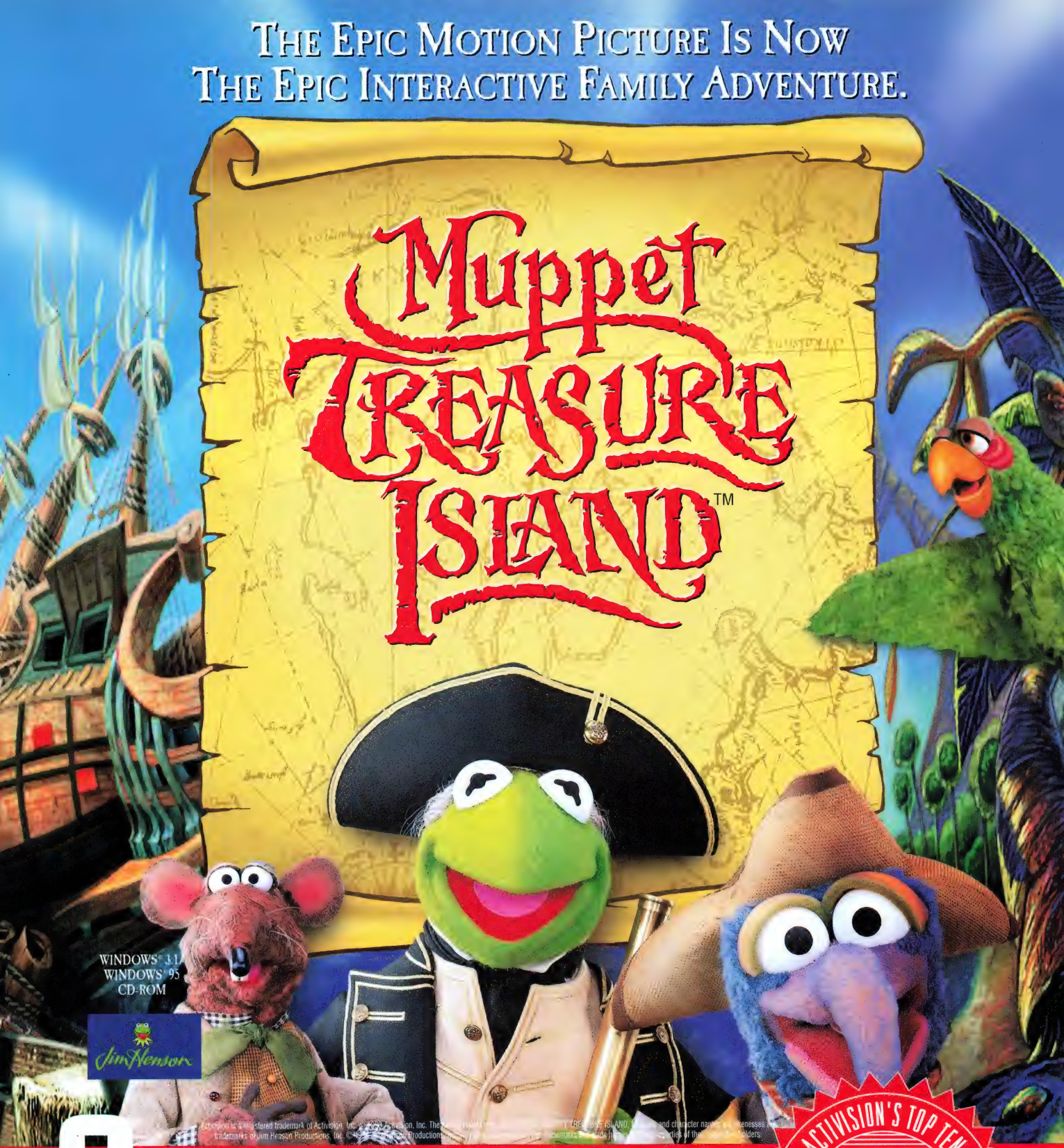
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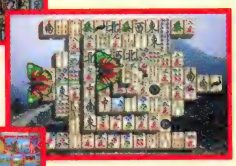
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SHANGHAI: GREAT MOMENTS

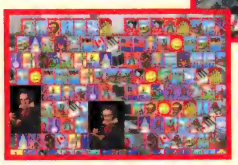
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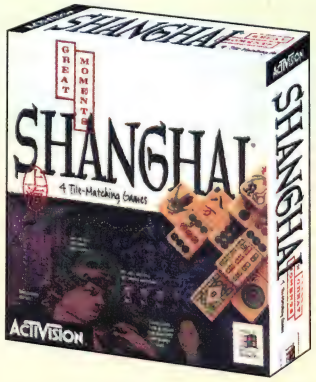


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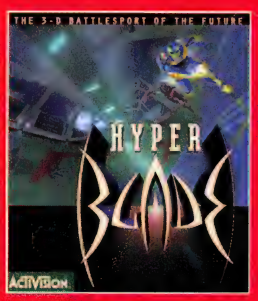
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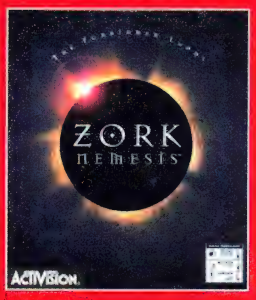
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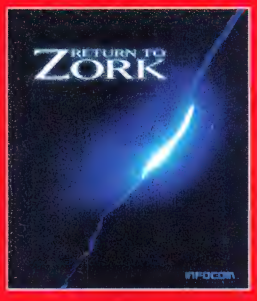


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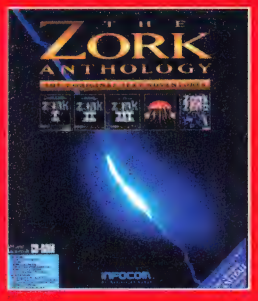
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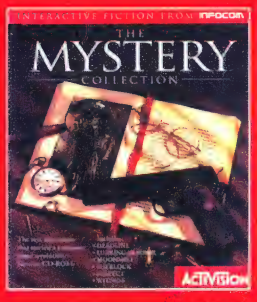
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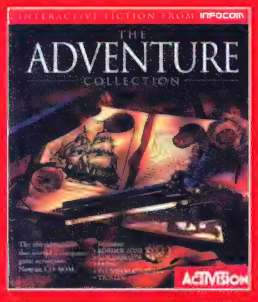
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Activision games must be purchased and receipt dated between November 15, 1996 and December 31, 1996.Offer valid on MS-DOS/Windows 95 games only. Requests must be postmarked by February 1, 1997. Allow 2-3 weeks for delivery. Offer not valid on other products and cannot be combined with any other offers. Only UPCs from qualifying Activision titles from Activision's Top Ten Games of 1996 will be accepted. Only the original store receipt(s) will be accepted. If purchases were made on two receipts, both receipts must be enclosed with Activision purchases circled. UPCs and receipts will not be returned. Offer limited to one per family, address, household, group or organization. Offer available only to registered owners of Activision products purchased. Not responsible for late, misdirected, incomplete or illegible requests. Offer good only in the U.S. and Canada. Canadian orders only: Bank checks and money order funds must be drawn from a U. S. bank. Void where prohibited, taxed or otherwise restricted. Redemption of free classic games subject to availability. Activision reserves the right to substitute a classic title of equal or greater value in the event of unavailability.

ACTIVISION®

HOLIDAY Gift Guide SPECTACULAR!

It's a challenge to shop for a person who eats, drinks, sleeps, and breathes computer games. Useful gifts like socks or a nice sweater are as unwelcome as an all-Shemp Three Stooges festival. When you're buying for someone whose habit is The Big "G," only an interactive fix will suffice.

There's a whole bunch of games on store shelves this time of year. But if you want your gift to keep on giving, even after everyone else has gone to bed, grab our annual gift guide before you head to the mall. With our help, you'll be able to sort out the Shemps from the Curleys and come home with a treasure that will keep your game geek in solitary isolation for days and weeks, or at least long enough to exchange all the useless gifts he bought for you.

Here's a look at the gems inside our bag of toys for the interactively inclined...

By Daniel Morris

HOLIDAY Gift Guide

What's to blame for that mischievous twinkle of bloodlust in your little game-player's eye? We'll give you 3-to-1 that it's any number of the ultra-hot action shoot-'em-ups that have grabbed the gaming world by the throat (and other appendages) since id Software first rolled out Doom. This holiday season there's no respite from the rage, as major new titles take aim at the title of World's Baddest Shooter.

Quake's aftershocks are still rumbling and will be felt long after the 1997 ball drops in Times Square. id Software's 1996 blockbuster was the most eagerly anticipated game in history, and immediately lined up alongside 3D Realms' **Duke Nukem 3D** as the evil twins of the first-person 3D action genre. Setting new standards in graphics, with huge strides in light-sourcing and atmospherics, Quake is the most immersive and relentless action game ever created.



Quake

Duke still has a few cartridges left in his ammo belt, however. Most serious triggermen have already discovered the joys of Dukematching (including a few studly maneuvers that Quake lacks, like crouching, flying, etc.). If you live with a firepower fanatic who hasn't been Duking it out yet, Duke Nukem 3D is a sure bet.

If you're already living with someone who runs around muttering phrases like "Damn, I'm good," "You suck," and "It's time to kick ass and chew bubble gum, and I'm all out of gum," they're probably ready for the **Duke Nukem Plutonium Pak**, which offers 11 new levels, new monsters, and new weapons.



SkyNET

The bottom line is that you can't go wrong with either of these titles—it's like debating the merits of a Ferrari vs. a Lamborghini. Both of the damn things haul.

And they're not the only games that are sure to shatter your Silent Night.



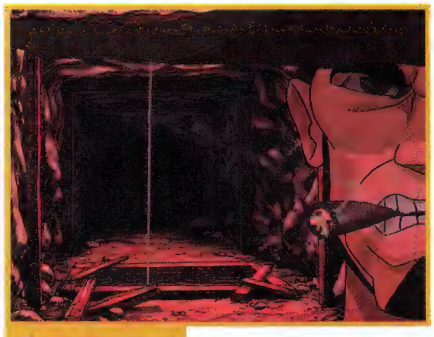
Duke Nukem 3D

Bethesda Softworks' **SkyNET** accelerates the *Terminator* universe into full-on multiplayer mode, offering prospective bloodfeuders the opportunity to stalk each other through a futuristic, mechanized, bombed-out Los Angeles. Thanks to motion trackers, there's nowhere to hide from your enemies, but there will be vehicles to commandeer (like the dreaded HKs, hunter-killer robots) and intricate building layouts just right for mounting a happy holiday ambush.

Early peeks at Scavenger/GT Interactive's **Into the Shadows** caused quite a stir at the E3 trade show last May. With true 3D models and Quake-worthy light-sourcing, it may prove to be the most graphically advanced shooter yet.

What could be more festive than mercenary work-for-hire in a universe where life is cheaper than engine lubricant? **MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries** puts you in command of a pay-to-slay band of BattleMech pilots in a follow-up prequel to Activision's MechWarrior 2.

And since this is the time for Meching Merry, Interplay's **Shattered Steel** is another of the good-looking Mech shoot-'em-ups vying for attention. It features Terraform, a Voxel 3D engine for realistic terrain, and a versatile Mission Builder for scenario construction.



Outlaws

And now for something completely different:

Got the holiday blahs? Fragging pig cops no longer blows your hair back? Take a look at LucasArts' Outlaws, a plot-driven shoot-'em-up that weds the 3D-shooting Dark Forces engine with the animated Full Throttle engine for a Wild West showdown where you'll have to stretch your conversational skills along with your trigger finger.

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Rainbow Studios

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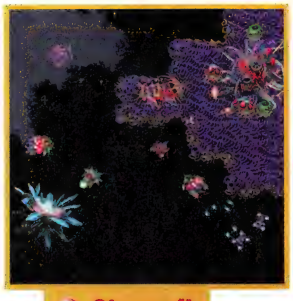
KIDS TO ADULTS K-A CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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STRATEGY

HOLIDAY Gift Guide

So what's the big deal about shoot-'em-ups, anyway? Gamers shouldn't be spending so much time engaged in such antisocial behavior, right? Why not get a game where your buddy can use his managerial and strategic skills to constructive use to, say, conquer the nation. Or the continent. Or the world. Or the whole friggin' universe! Then, they won't laugh! Then, they won't point and make those "joystick" jokes! We'll show them! We'll show them all!



Starcraft

From its starting headquarters in the cow pastures of Irvine, Calif., Blizzard Entertainment redefined strategy gaming with the real-time wizardry of Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness. (Talk about empire-building.) Now, they're about to go to (hit the reverb) Outerrrrr Spaaaacce. **Starcraft** is the next step in the evolution of the real-time strategy game, a fast-paced conflict as Terrans fight alien species in an interplanetary race for resources.

It's not the only space-faring slugfest. Starcraft will have stiff competition from MicroProse's **Master of Orion II: Battle at Antares**, which updates the company's classic space conquest game. Strategic Simulations Inc. will also fire its phasers with **Star General**, a game that launches SSI's General series into the far reaches of the cosmos.

Regressing to a less hi-tech stretch of non-human history (or human non-history), New World Computing offers **Heroes of Might & Magic II: The Succession Wars**. Sierra On-Line brings us **Lords of the Realm II**, another medieval sequel with squabbling would-be kings laying siege to one another. And when you get right down to it, if we can't lay siege to each other, who can we lay siege to?

To wage the wars ripped from today's headlines, SSI's **Steel Panthers II** translates the stellar tank-warfare engine of the WWII original into modern-day battles, including the Persian Gulf War. New World's **Wages of War** combines man-by-man, turn-based strategy similar to X-COM with the managerial duties of Jagged Alliance as you head up a mercenary outfit conducting black ops for the highest bidder.



Lords of the Realm II



Wages of War

And for the Fox Mulder on your shopping list (you know, the list encrypted in Native American dialect), you can't pass up MicroProse's **X-COM: Apocalypse**, which presents Earth's defenders with a new alien menace that can clandestinely infiltrate human society—playable in either traditional turn-based or real-time mode.

Z



And now for something completely different:

Any game can mix wanton destruction with bean-counting resource management, but how many can do both while inducing belly laughs? One that does is Z, the real-time futuristic wargame from Europe's Bitmap Brothers. Send mechanical underlings into battle, but be ready for some robotic "smart mouth" action. These guys have attitude.

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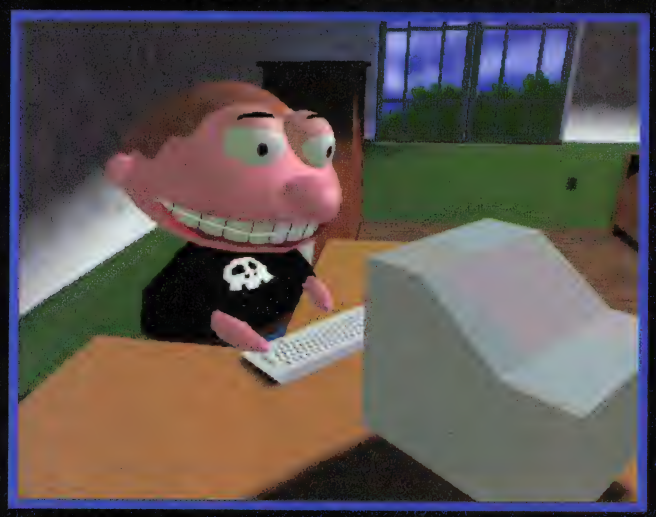


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System Requirements: Windows 95, Pentium 100 MHz, High Color 640x480, 14,400 modem

HOLIDAY Gift Guide

ADVENTURE

To boldly go where no gamer has gone before. Outside of a guest shot on *Baywatch* (as the psychotic swimsuit tailor), what could be cooler than that? If Little Johnny gets tired of fragging monstrosities (and schoolmates), it may be time to provide a little more cerebral entertainment. A strong crop of adventure games promises to keep your game giftee guessing long into the night.



Tomb Raider

Eidos Interactive's maiden voyage, **Tomb Raider**, sends you trespassing into the bowels of ancient ruins in search of the treasures within. (Don't people arrange protests against this sort of thing?) Pack your guns and your thinking cap, because without both you'll quickly find yourself becoming ancient history. Eidos broke the sex-discrimination barrier by making the lead character in this game a woman. Do they lose Politically Correct points because she looks like a Wonder Bra spokesmodel? Not with us they don't.



Star Trek: Borg

Obsidian, from Rocket Science Games, promises to be Myst on acid. You'll explore a dazzling and deranged virtual world where nothing is as it seems. Rocket Science's other adventure offering is the tongue-in-cheek **The Space Bar**, where you investigate a murder on a goofball space station. Nyuk, nyuk.

Didn't we say we'd boldly go? Well, that can only mean one thing—it's time to stoke the dilithium crystals, set speed to warp six, and fire a full photon spread as the adventures of the Federation continue. Simon & Schuster's **Star Trek: Borg** takes you deeper into the final frontier.

DreamWorks Interactive delivers some delightful family entertainment with **The Neverhood**, a Claymation adventure that used over three tons of clay to meticulously animate every frame of the game. (Thereby causing the Southern California clay shortage of 1996, which found desperate sculptors lining up for days in front of crafts stores begging for plasticene remnants. Riots were narrowly averted.) The graphics are breathtaking and the gameplay a hoot. (You're right. We made up that shortage thing.) See our review in this issue.

Much along the same oddball lines is Philips' **Down in the Dumps**. The Blubs, a sort of interplanetary Simpsons, crash-land on Earth and need your help in saving themselves from a gang of rowdy space pirates.



Diablo

ROLE-PLAYING

Sometimes a gamer just needs a break from being what he is: a gamer. So what do we do? We play games where we can be fighters, mages, rangers, ninjas, and dwarves. Just one question: Can you tell me why anyone would want to be a bard? You run around in a feathered hat, singing and quoting poetry. You hide behind wizards and still get your butt kicked. Yeah, right. Hold me back. Gotta be a bard...

Diablo promises to do for RPGs what Warcraft II did for strategy games, so it's no wonder that Blizzard is behind both of them. Diablo features an isometric view and eye-catching graphics that follow your party through treacherous dungeons in search of the game's demonic namesake.

Bethesda Softworks' **Daggerfall** hopes to reawaken the slumbering classic RPG genre in a follow-up to its Elder Scrolls: Arena. The game includes a vast map, varied adventures, and the ability to play just about anybody—good or evil.

The Descent engine gets a workout in a new genre in Interplay's **Descent to Undermountain**, a role-playing game in 360-degree, 3D real-time action.

And now for something completely different:

He's middle-aged. Overweight. Balding. Wears bad jewelry. But for 10 years, Leisure Suit Larry has been able to score like Tommy at a pinball table. Sierra's Leisure Suit Larry: Love for Sail puts Larry Laffer to sea in search of...what he's always searching for.

Leisure Suit Larry: Love for Sail



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-Computer Games Strategy Plus

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CD-ROM MACPLAY

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FLY & DRIVE

Paranoid now that your growing gameplayer has that driver's license? Wait until you see him at the controls of a supersonic, death-dealing jet fighter!

NovaLogic lets him surrender to Freudian symbolism in a choice of three military monoliths beginning with **F-22 Lightning II**, one of several new sims featuring the Air Force's next-generation air superiority fighter. For budding pilots with their sights still firmly on the ground, **Comanche 3** puts you in the seat of an advanced tactical-support combat helicopter. And if it just has to be landlocked, **Armored Fist 2: M1A2 Abrams** will offer a sim of the Army's most devastating combat tank. All three games use the Voxel Space 2 engine to render the kind of sharp sim environments admired by manly men.



Armored Fist 2: M1A2 Abrams

Empire's **Flying Corps** sends you into the hotly contested skies over World War I Europe as one of the daredevil aces who waged the first major air campaign. Highly customizable and presenting a huge array of period planes, Flying Corps will promote Snoopy off that dog-house and into a Sopwith Camel.



Flying Saucer

Is your gamer the type who stands on a sand dune in the late afternoon, gazing up at twin suns and wishing he were somewhere else? Get him LucasArts' **X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter**, where he can go head-to-head or join in multiplayer dogfights between the Rebels and the Empire.

X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter



That old muscle car parked under a moldy tarp in the garage is just begging to be rebuilt and retooled—maybe with some machine guns, or a flamethrower, or some tire-shredding spikes. Then it'll be set for **Interstate 76**, Activision's funkadelic road war that sets '70s-vintage autos against each other in a near-future fight for survival. We guarantee they won't be dissing you at the drive-thru window anymore.

Virgin's **Screamer 2** lays more rubber down in a follow-up to the high-adrenaline racing game. Screamer was among the best of the racing batch, so the follow-up should be at least a notch above. The arcade-style mayhem is as socially irresponsible as always.

MicroProse is going to be right up there at the starting line with its own racer. **Grand Prix II** provides you with an international circuit of 16 tracks—from Monaco to Suzuka—in search of the Drivers' Championship. In addition to the furious on-track racing, you'll have to stay ahead in the off-track race to design and maintain the superior car with the superior components.

Interstate 76



And now for something completely different:

Abducted by aliens? AnyRiver Entertainment hopes that you'll soon be losing large chunks of missing time to its upcoming Flying Saucer, a wild "UFO flight sim" modeled on speculative accounts of UFO flight physics. You not only steal an alien disc from Area 51, but conduct your own abductions and participate in interstellar combat. (Insert Mulderism here.)

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NUMBER NINE

HOLIDAY Gift Guide

It's sad...your game player is so addicted to the computer, it's been weeks since he saw the sun (though he has some nice CRT radiation burns). Don't despair; if you can't get him out on the field, the least you can do is bring the field to him.

Electronic Arts muscles even stronger into the PC sports market with the unveiling of its benchmark Madden NFL series on computer, **Madden NFL '97**. Head-to-head and modem/network play should make it one of the premier football games ever to hit the PC. See our review in this issue. Not content to sit around on its ice, EA Sports also unwraps **NHL '97**, featuring new 3D graphics, textured (and numbered) jerseys, and an on-ice camera view.

Madden won't be alone on the virtual gridiron this season. Acclaim's **NFL Quarterback Club '97** is getting *Monday Night Football* commercial time, an irony since OverTime Sports is releasing its very own **Monday Night Football** with Al, Frank, and Dan in the announcers' booth. But wait, there's more—Philips' **Total Control Football** offers a comprehensive coaching/managerial package for stats freaks.

Don't worry, cagers: you've not been forgotten. Roundball action heats up with Acclaim's **NBA Jam Extreme**, for more of the high-flying hoops we've come to expect from a Jam Session. There's also GTE Interactive's NCAA **Championship Basketball**, which lets you coach one of 64 teams through a collegiate season and March Madness.

Madden NFL '97



Has America finally discovered soccer? VR Sports' **VR Soccer '96** hopes to fuel the boom in the World's Game with its 3D "futball" festival.

What about America's pastime? No, not in-line hockey. The other one. **Triple Play '97** is EA's new baseball game, featuring MLB teams, trades, and a visually stunning set of real stadiums. **Front Page Sports Baseball '96** updates the stats-fan-friendly FPS baseball series.



VR Soccer

Links LS

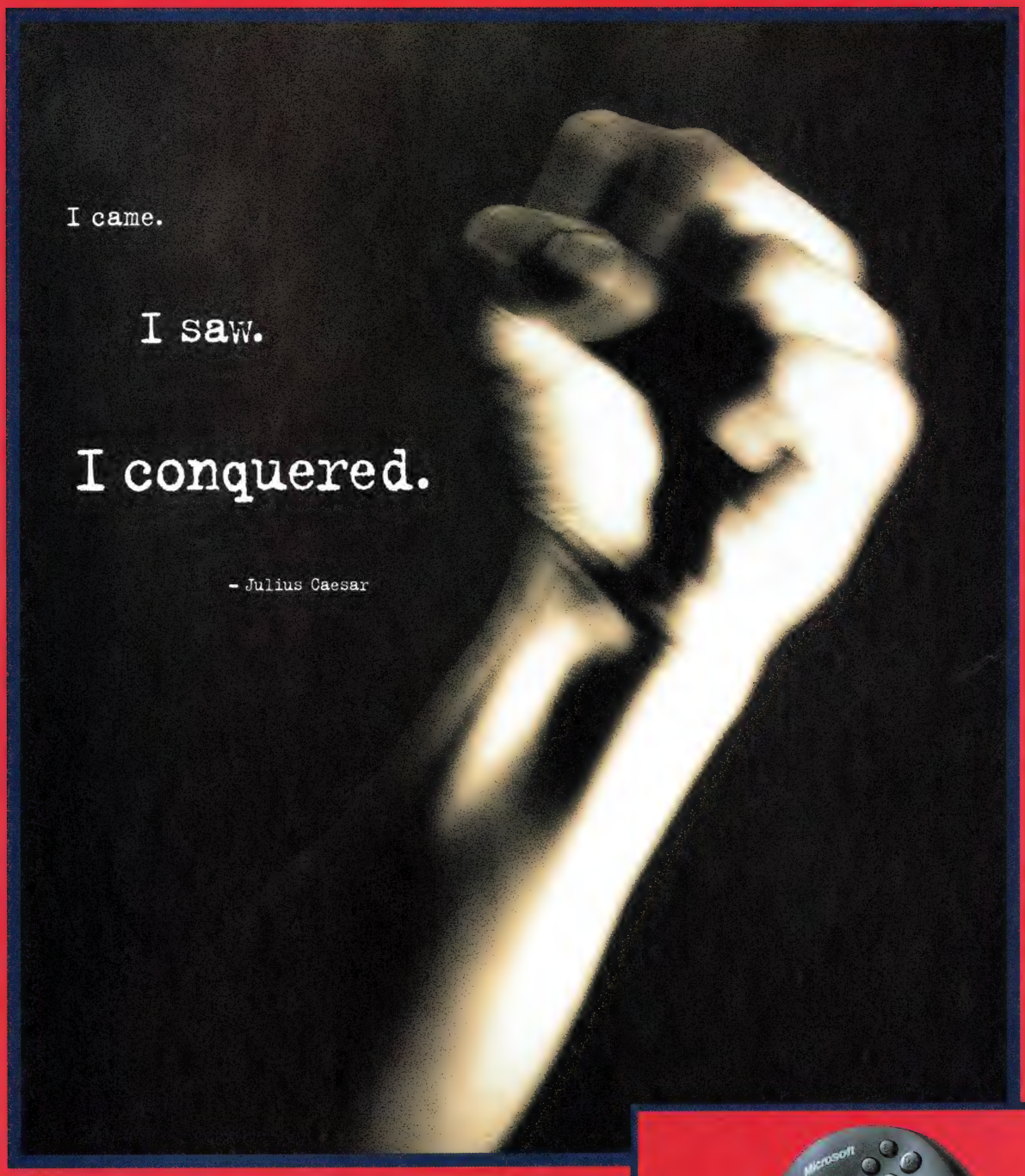


Duffers have a few choices of their own. Access Software's stunning **Links LS** offers a near-photorealistic round of golf for those who don't mind the lack of tournament play. Microsoft's **Golf 3.0** allows for easy multiplayer golfing and features championship courses. And Looking Glass Technologies' **British Open Golf** lets you tee off at the Royal and Ancient Club.

Still no good tennis games, folks. Maybe next year.

And now for something completely different:

The Space Jam, also from Acclaim, is a Jordan-endorsed tie-in to the movie of the same name, which finds His Airness in cosmic competition.



Absolute victory. Total control.

With all the buttons you could ever need, the Microsoft SideWinder™ game pad is going to give your white knuckled hands the ride of their life on all of your Windows® 95 games. Hard to remember multi-button moves are a stroll through the park as you can map them to a single button on the game pad. Suddenly someone is wondering what just hit him. The SideWinder game pad is perfect for a little ugly head-to-head action since you can connect up to 4 game pads for fully functional, multi-player play. All of which are great reasons to buy more than just one. So step out of the way, because the battle is about to begin.



Microsoft

Where do you want to go today?® www.microsoft.com/sidewinder/

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GAMING GRAB BAG

HOLIDAY Gift Guide

This is the rest. He may not know exactly what it is, but he wants it. Trust us. Games are our lives. They pay us to know stuff like this.

FormGen's **Duke Nukem Screen Saver** is for the guy who wished the flying toasters would smack somebody in the head once in a while. Now he can have heaps of slain pig cops cluttering his monitor. Aren't you into the holiday spirit yet?



Chessmaster 5000

Budding grandmasters have a bunch of chess games to pick from this Christmas. Sierra's **Power Chess** features the WChess engine, which fought IBM's Deep Blue to a draw at the 1995 World Computer Chess Championship. **Chessmaster 5000** from Mindscape offers a version of the Fritz engine, which beat Deep Blue, and a dedicated Web site for modem play. Simon & Schuster's **Extreme Chess** features detailed models of some of the world's greatest matches for analysis and replay. And **Corel Chess** includes 4,000 championship games with Internet and modem playability.

CrystalVision Software's **Conquer** is a real-time wargame without the messy details—simple, fast, and down and dirty. Up to four people can play via modem in an old-style battle without the "hassle" of too much brain drain.

Steven Spielberg's Director's Chair from Knowledge Adventure/DreamWorks Interactive puts you at the helm of the mogul's next project: a Quentin Tarantino-Jennifer Aniston prison flick. (Hey, really. In fact, let's all just pause a moment and fantasize about it...) You'll prep a script, shoot scenes, and edit the feature in the face of delays and cost overruns. Succeed, and let's do lunch, baby—fail, and you'll never eat lunch in this town again!



Steven Spielberg's Director's Chair

Add-ons to add on: WizardWorks' **W!Zone** provides Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness buffs with 50 new battlegrounds on which to raise bloody hell. The package supports two to eight players and includes a tips-and-tactics guide. CrystalVision's **Death Match 7000** offers 7,000 (yep, 7,000) new levels for Doom, Doom II, and Thy Flesh Consumed. It also has cheats, a level editor, and new weapons. For adding on to Microsoft's Fury^3, WizardWorks' **F!Zone** brings you three new planets to lay waste to.

Tim McCarver's The Way Baseball Works from Simon & Schuster is a comprehensive guided tour of the grand old game. It has such nifty features as a design-your-own-pitch editor, a baseball strategy tutor, and an online batting tournament.

GameTek's **Micro Machines 2** highlights those irrepressible little scale vehicles that we used to collect and hoard like they were gold doubloons. (We all remember that lightning-fast talking guy from the commercials, right? NewMicroMiniMachinessorealthey'llabsolutlyblowyouaway!) The game allows you to design and construct homemade tracks and then race an assortment of Micro Machines.

All right, so it's not a game, exactly. But **The Ultimate James Bond: An Interactive Dossier** is too cool for any Bond buff to be without. A complete sourcebook for the adventures of the Union Jack's staunchest defender, this multimedia package includes behind-the-screens looks at the world, weapons, and women of the 007 universe, with bios of every major character and actor from Pierce Brosnan to Richard Kiel's menacing Jaws. (I almost became his neighbor a few years back, and was surprised to learn that Jaws is a Boy Scout troop leader in real life. You should see his Removing Nails With Your Teeth merit badge.) This disc, which includes a copy of *Goldeneye*, is the perfect gift for those who like their martinis shaken, not stirred.

The Ultimate James Bond: An Interactive Dossier



And now for something completely different:

Activision returns to its PC roots with a compendium release of its Infocom text adventures, 32 in all, with Classic Text Adventures Masterpieces. How far back we goin'? We're goin' *way* back. In addition to Zorks I through III, you'll find Deadline, Cutthroats, Planetfall, Leather Goddesses of Phobos, and more. Guess what, folks? It's still a blast. "Go to computer store," "Buy game," and "Rediscover joy" of simple, elegant all-text gaming. Contemporary game players be warned: modest verbal skills are required.

HOLIDAY Gift Guide

EDUTAINMENT

Just how old is your game player, anyway? No, no, not the age he acts. His actual age. That young? What's he doing playing these big-boy games? Steer him straight with children's titles that aim to educate as well as entertain.

Activision's **Muppet Treasure Island** is based on the big-screen film of the same name. Help Kermit, Miss Piggy, Gonzo, and the rest of the gang sail the seven seas, outwit pirates, and uncover buried treasure. With clips from the film and panoramic 360-degree views, Muppet Treasure Island is one of the best-looking big-budget kids titles in a long time.

DreamWorks Interactive dips into the library of teen-literature spookmeister R.L. Stine for **Goosebumps: Escape from Horrorland**. Like the characters in TV's *Goosebumps*, players have to conquer their fears to solve puzzling mysteries around their small town. The game features 3D sets, animation, puppetry, and live-action video, plus cameos by Isabella Rossellini and the always-frightening Jeff Goldblum.

LucasArts' **Mortimer and the Riddles of the Medallion** lets you choose between a boy or girl character and then sends you off on the back of a giant flying snail to foil a nefarious plot to turn the world's animals into stone. Fly around rescuing already-frozen animals and zapping evil beasties.



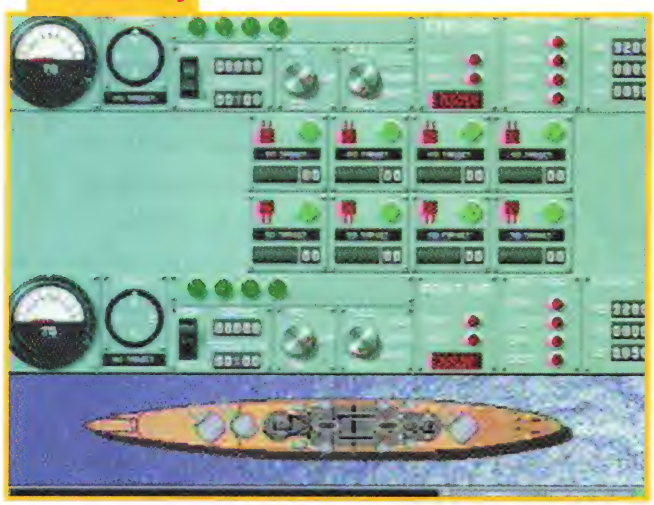
Beyond the Limit: The Ultimate Climb

Microsoft's **Beyond the Limit: The Ultimate Climb** sends you straight up the face of sheer rock walls and through treacherous mine shafts in an attempt to climb a challenging mountain. Why? Because it's there. Kids have to make critical decisions about planning their climb and evading pitfalls.

Sonic Schoolhouse from Computer Media Technology brings kids a classroom they can get down in, where the course of study is all about sound and music-making.

Interplay's Brainstorm division brings us **Mario's FunDamentals**, in which a chubby Italian plumber teaches and plays five classic games. You'll find checkers, Go Fish, dominoes, backgammon, and the dice game yacht.

Brighter Child Interactive has had a busy time. Its **Amazing Math** features Marvel Comics superheroes Spider-Man, Wolverine, Iron Man, and She-Hulk in four math-learning games. **Go West!** is an educational simulation of 1880s homesteading, reminiscent of a souped-up Oregon Trail. And **Message in a Fossil** puts you to work at an archaeological dig hunting for dinosaur bones.



Final Fury

BARGAIN BIN

Collecting its Great Naval Battles series, Strategic Simulations Inc. sends you **Final Fury**, with all four of the GNB releases gathered in one tome. It also includes a new World War I scenario disc, Demise of the Dreadnoughts 1914–1918. The volume of classic naval wargaming comes in at $39.95, and fans of naval military sims are guaranteed many an hour of play throughout each of these discs, particularly the exhaustive Pacific War disc.

You can't get games for $15 anymore, but N-TK (Entertainment Technology) is doing just that with its Memorex Software Series. **Animation Hangman** has 1,362 hangman puzzles and animations for the hanging. **Skill Traps** contains four logic games that require quick wits and strong nerves, and **Hunt Masters** brings you the decidedly unpeaceful pastime of taking out ducks, fish, and prairie dogs.

And for $25, you'll be treated to one of the funniest rounds of solitaire ever with **Masque's Politicards '96 Solitaire**. The deck consists of 54 stars of muckraking headlines, from Ollie North to Bill Clinton. The designers respected no political party and crossed all ideological bounds to bring politics-savvy gamers a bitingly satiric solitaire deck. Your jokers, needless to say, are David Letterman and Jay Leno.



Politicards '96 Solitaire

ADMIRAL

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- Windows 95 DirectX Game
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HOLIDAY Gift Guide

What good's having all this stuff if you don't have the horsepower to run it? In a time when demands on hardware are crushing, keeping up with developers can be a full-time concern. Here are some of the holiday season's hardware winners.



SideWinder

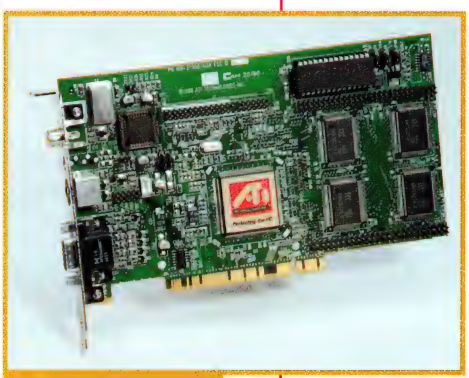
Microsoft's **SideWinder** gamepad is the end-all, be-all of Windows 95 pads. It's compatible with any pad-supporting game running in Win 95 or under Win 95 in a DOS shell. Its ergonomics and look are topnotch. And it can be daisy-chained for up to four pads with full functionality in each, all through one port in the PC. If you're a Win 95 gamer, this is one cool pad.

Sure, you can go into denial, but we both know you want a new 3D-graphics accelerator card. Those who have seen a non-enhanced game and then seen it accelerated can vouch for me when I say they aren't the same games. The early standout is ATI Technologies' **3D Xpression**, featuring the 3D Rage accelerator. A 2MB video card with astounding 3D acceleration, the Xpression turns MechWarrior 2 into a stunningly immersive environment that the non-accelerated version just can't match. A slew of accelerator cards will be on the shelves, and only time will tell which become standards and which become memories. But we both know you aren't going to be able to hold out much longer. Make plans.

SimulEyes



Speaking of 3D enhancement, take a spin in the **SimulEyes VR** glasses and you'll be treated to what Aladdin and Jasmine might call "a whole new world": true depth within the monitor with stereo vision that plays superbly. We cautioned you a few months back about the lack of games supported, but in the meantime SimulEyes has signed up dozens of developers, and the system's initial software bundle has expanded to include the Descent II Test Flight, Slipstream 5000, and Rise of the Triad. Fairly affordable and always a delight, SimulEyes is our pick for home VR system of the season.



3D Xpression

The **MasterPilot** from QuickShot is an all-in-one flight-sim deck designed to take the troublesome keyboard shuffling out of your piloting. The deck, which looks sort of like one side of the old Battleship game, comes pre-programmed for 33 games, including a few action games (like Duke) but mainly flight sims a la U.S. Navy Fighters. The idea is to operate the pre-programmed keyboard commands with your left hand on the stand-up deck and fly with the joystick in your right (there's a throttle on the deck). It may take some getting used to, but MasterPilot can drastically reduce your flight-sim headaches. It's also upgradable, with a cartridge that can be replaced as new games are added by QuickShot.

And now for something completely different:

MindDrive, from The Other 90%, is best described as a bold experiment in PC hardware. The idea is that a sensor at your fingertip can read bioelectric signals from your brain and translate them into movement on your computer screen, allowing you to, say, play a skiing game without ever moving a muscle.

MindSkier, the system's first application, attempts just that. With the MindDrive sensor in place, your task is to "think" left or right, steering your on-screen skier with nothing more than thought commands. Just about everyone in this office has tried the thing, and while our skeptical natures forced at least one of us to bellow "Rubbish!" in a thick British accent (because the British trust no one and nothing), the rest of us were able, at least for a few moments, to feel like the MindDrive might be responding to our thought commands (because we salute good old Yankee Doodle gullibility). Like I said, bold is the word. If you're willing to take the chance, let us know which finger you want to use when you're through.



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SHOPPING LIST

HOLIDAY Gift Guide

3D Xpression ATI Technologies; 800-462-4607; www.atitech.ca; PC; $219

ABC's Monday Night Football OverTime Sports; 410-771-8550; www.otsports.com; Win 95 CD; $49–$59

Amazing Math Brighter Child Interactive; 614-847-8118; www.brighterchild.com; Win 95 CD; $14.99

Animation Hangman Entertainment Technology N-TK; 310-403-0039; Win 3.1/Win 95 CD; $14.99

Armored Fist 2: M1A2 Abrams NovaLogic; 800-858-1322; www.novalogic.com; DOS CD; $49–$59

Beyond the Limit: The Ultimate Climb Microsoft; www.microsoft.com; 800-426-9400; Win 95 CD; $44.95

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Duke Nukem 3D FormGen; 800-367-6436; www.3drealms.com; DOS CD; $39.99

Duke Nukem Plutonium PAK FormGen; 800-367-6436; www.3drealms.com; DOS CD; $26

Duke Nukem Screen Saver FormGen; 800-367-6436; www.3drealms.com; DOS CD; $29.95

Extreme Chess Davidson & Associates/Simon & Schuster Interactive; 800-223-2348; www.ssinteractive.com; Win 3.1/Win 95 CD; $60

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MasterPilot QuickShot; 408-263-4163; www.quickshot.com; PC; $99.99

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Message in a Fossil Brighter Child Interactive; 614-847-8118; www.brighterchild.com; DOS CD; $49–$59

Micro Machines 2 GameTek; 800-426-3835; www.gametek.com; DOS CD; $30–$40

MindDrive The Other 90%; www.other90.com; DOS CD; (available retail only) approx. $179.99

MindSkier The Other 90%; www.other90.com; DOS CD; (available retail only) approx. $30

Mortimer and the Riddles of the Medallion LucasArts Entertainment; 800-985-8227; www.lucasarts.com; DOS CD; $39.95

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NBA Jam Extreme Acclaim Entertainment; 516-656-5000; www.acclaimnation.com; DOS CD; $49.99

NCAA Championship Basketball GTE Entertainment; 800-483-8632; www.im.gte.com; DOS CD; $59.95

NFL Quarterback Club '97 Acclaim Entertainment; 516-656-5000; www.acclaimnation.com; DOS CD; $49.95

The Neverhood DreamWorks Interactive; 800-426-9400; www.neverhood.com; Win 95 CD; $54.95

NFL Total Control Football Philips Interactive Media; 800-340-7888; www.philipsmedia.com; DOS CD; $49.95

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Obsidian Rocket Science Games; 800-733-7288; www.segasoft.com; DOS CD; $49–$59

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Screamer 2 Virgin Interactive Entertainment; 800-874-4607; www.vie.com; DOS CD; $49.95

Shattered Steel Interplay; 800-969-4863; www.interplay.com; Win 95 CD, DOS CD; $49.95

SideWinder Microsoft; 800-426-9400; www.microsoft.com/games; Win 95; $35

SimulEyes VR StereoGraphics; 800-746-3937; www.stereographics.com; PC; $129

Skill Traps Entertainment Technology N-TK; 310-403-0039; Win 3.1/Win 95 CD; $14.99

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Steven Spielberg's Director's Chair Knowledge Adventure; www.directorschair.com; 310-473-4147; Win 3.1/Win 95 CD; $39–$49

Tim McCarver's The Way Baseball Works Simon & Schuster Interactive; 800-223-2348; www.ssinteractive; Win 95 CD; $39.95

Tomb Raider Eidos Interactive; 415-616-2022; www.eidosinteractive.com; Win 95/DOS CD; $50

Triple Play '97 Electronic Arts; 800-245-4525; www.ea.com; DOS CD; $39–$49

The Ultimate James Bond: An Interactive Dossier MGM Interactive; 800-646-5808; www.mgmua.com/interactive2/; Win 3.1/Win 95 CD; $39.95

VR Soccer '96 VR Sports; 800-468-3775; www.vrsports.com; DOS CD; $54.95

W!Zone WizardWorks; 800-228-5063; www.wizworks.com; DOS CD; $19–$29

Wages of War New World Computing; 800-325-8898; www.nwcomputing.com; Win 95 CD; $49.95

X-COM: Apocalypse MicroProse; 800-879-7529; www.microprose.com; Win 95 CD; not yet priced

X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter LucasArts Entertainment; 800-985-8227; www.lucasarts.com; DOS CD; $54.95

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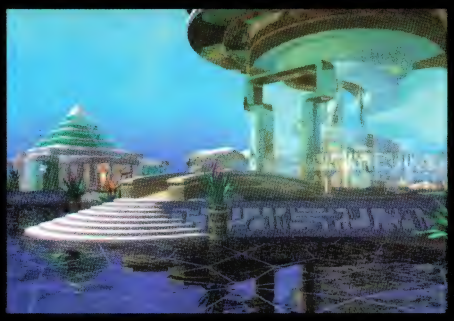




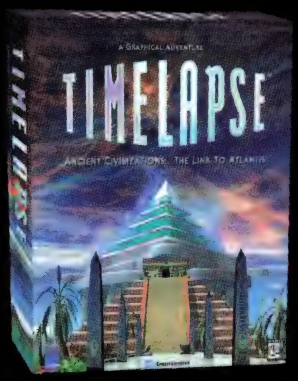
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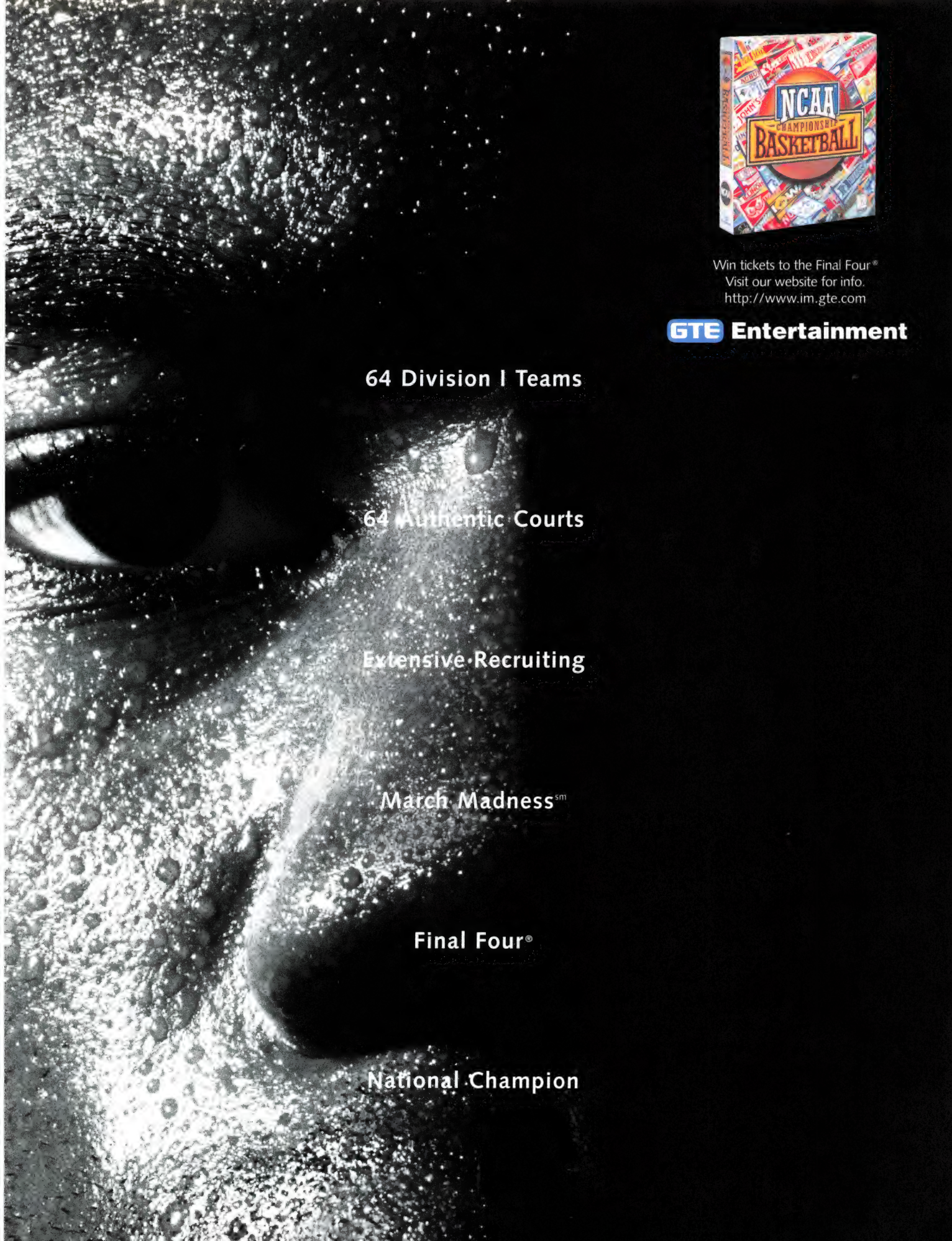
3D SGI Graphics

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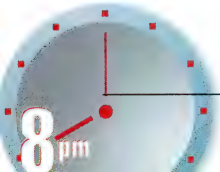
The Lost (Online) Weekend

Online gaming—so what's it all about? Is it all it's cracked up to be? There's only one way to find out...

By Rob Smith

Got Duke, played it, finished it, threw it in the box with all the other completed games. Got Quake, played it longer, harder, and more intensely, but it followed Duke into the box. There id's masterpiece mingled with the likes of Command & Conquer, Big Red Racing, and a host of others. My hard-earned dollars had bought their entertainment, and now the software sits idle. ¶ But there's life yet in some of these dogs. I've heard about online gaming. It's going to be all the rage and the fabled "future of gaming," according to some supposedly knowledgeable sources. Hey, who am I to dispute the views of Peter Molyneux, head game guru at Bullfrog, and Richard Garriott, the mystical Lord British of Ultima fame? These guys know their stuff. But what's the real deal? ¶ Multiplayer gaming sounds like it should kick ass. Or, more to the point, it's where I'll get the chance to kick some myself. Those hours battling the Ogres and Shamblers in Quake will be for more than just my personal, private satisfaction—it was great for me, but how will it be for you in the online gaming world? ¶ There are so many unanswered questions: How easy is it to get to these online services? How long does it take to set up the software and connect? Is the hassle involved worth it? With the dread thought of hearing a hefty phone bill come through the mail, it might be an idea to log how much time can be spent playing these games. ¶ I've talked to friends and heard through the gaming grapevine that Dukematches are pretty damn fine. I could get into that. Armed with my prized beast machine, complete with the all-important 28.8 modem, the journey to the future is ready to begin. That box of software has been retrieved from its last resting place. I'm ready to go...

continued on page 93

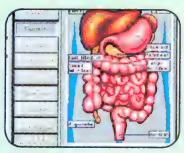


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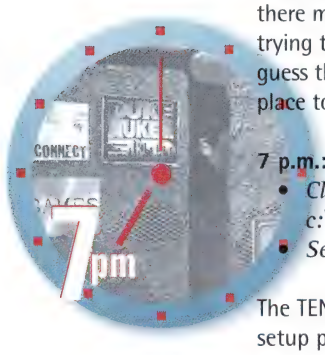
IBM



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No Life

So here I sit on Friday night, no date (for a change, I hasten to add), friends away for the weekend, nothing better to do than play some games. Perhaps some online social interaction will uncover a few cyberpals. Hey, there may even be some women there. Nah—who am I trying to kid? It's 7 p.m. and I wanna play some Duke. I guess the Total Entertainment Network (TEN) is the place to go—they're listed in Duke's instructions.



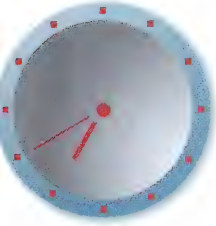
7 p.m.:

- *Click on Windows shortcut to c:\duke3d\setup.exe.*
- *Select TEN game*

The TEN software bursts into life and the account setup procedure begins. Billing method selected. Alter-ego and password chosen. Great—it seems that my software is already out of date and I need an upgrade. No choice. Begin the download.

7:15 p.m.: 50% complete. Guess I could put some laundry in.

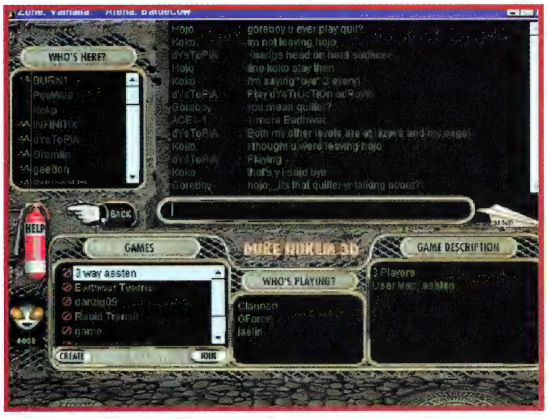
7:20 p.m.: Laundry whirring.



7:30 p.m.: Download and upgrade complete. Laundry doing nicely. Time to connect.

7:35 p.m.: Crazy little Mr. Bandwidth guy tells me that my connection sucks. Wanna play Duke? he sneers. Forget it. Log off. Well, laundry's still not finished—may as well try to connect again.

7:40 p.m.: Connect. All right! The bandwidth geezer comes through with an OK connection in the Pandemonium zone.



A large chat area and simple access to the games make TEN easy to navigate.

7:42 p.m.: Enter the Recruit room. I'm there. I am online. There's some chat going on. I'll watch for a while. Hey, this might as well be the WWF with all the testosterone-overdosed posturing going on. Just good-natured fun. I want to kill.

7:45 p.m.: A game opens up. Hollywood Holocaust, three players. I join.

7:46 p.m.: Game fires up.



7:47 p.m.: I'm there, listed at the top of the screen. My Duke stutters into life. Go...

7:48 p.m.: Crap. It bombed. But it can be rescued. Back to the chat room we go.

7:50 p.m.: Quick postmortem on who screwed up. But have no fear—this is a brave new world; there's bound to be teething problems. I can cope with that. Let's go again.

7:52 p.m.: It happens. Duke appears and I'm moving, looking for prey. It helps that I know this level like the back of my hand. The RPG is the first priority. But there's a problem. It's known in the online trade as "lag." I press a key and nothing happens. And then it does happen, seconds later. Getting used to this is one royal pain in the rear. A necessary evil? I'm not paying for the service yet, so I'll go with it.

7:53 p.m.: A sickening scream comes from my Duke and I crumple to the floor and see an opponent run past, RPG in hand. That'll teach me to get philosophical when there's a Dukematch going on. Right, let's get



Ahem, er, time to die.

back into the game and kick some serious butt. I respawn and die instantly. Appearing in the middle of a major firefight is not good.

7:55 p.m.: So far, no good. I have yet to score my first kill. Lag is cheesing me off, big time. Then it happens. RPG in hand, Duke in the crosshairs, I fire and turn to make a sharp exit, assured that the kill is mine. But nothing happens. Suddenly I'm facing a wall and the rocket explodes. Suicide? What? My score: -1. What the hell is that all about?!

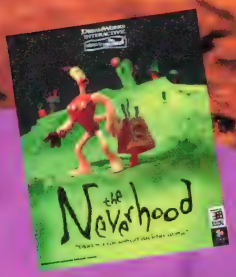
7:56 p.m.: Right, so that's what can happen. Another lesson learned. It's time I started dealing out a few lessons of my own. The battle begins. I chase a hapless Duke, firing just the pistol as he falls to his knees, dropping the RPG. The sense of satisfaction is awesome.

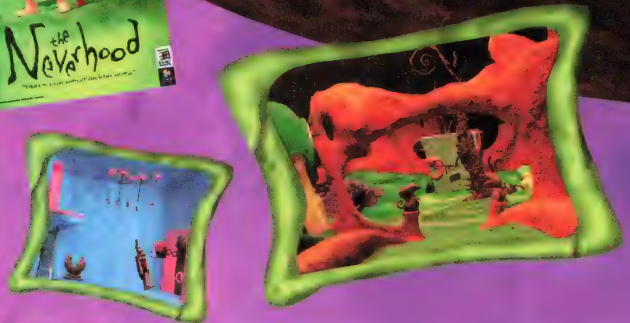
8.00 p.m.: I am great. I'm the king. I'm ahead and giving these weenies a Duke lesson they'll not soon forget.

8:17 p.m.: Someone has to leave. Wussy. Come back here and fight like a man. But he's gone. Back to the chat room. This is way cool. I'm Jonesing for a rematch. Some guy in the chat room wants to kill. "I lost my job today," he wails, "I wanna shoot some people." Hmm. Disgruntled postal worker? Anyway, a four-player

You're Fighting to protect good and Restore the Rightful King to power.

The Bad News is you're the guy on the right.





"Clever, an utterly different vision and experience from all the lookalike games..."
—NEWSDAY

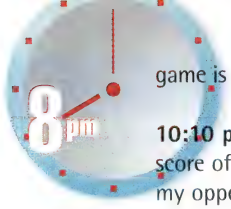
The good news is you're a lot smarter than the guy on the left. Good thing, considering you'll have to solve more than 60 puzzles in order to succeed in the twisted, clay-animated world of Neverhood. You'll help Klaymen avoid pitfalls, collect clues, and kick a little clay butt. All to defeat the evil Klogg and bring the Neverhood back to normal. At least, as normal as it ever gets. [www.DreamWorksGames.com]

DREAMWORKS INTERACTIVE

the Neverhood™

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game is being readied for an LA Rumble. I'm in.

10:10 p.m.: With a total frag count of over 200, my score of 74 stands proud against the 36, 48, and 52 of my opponents. It's official: I am God. Sweating, drained, exhilarated, it's back to the chat room for a spot of post-match heckling. The main topic of debate isn't my lesson on Dukeing, though; it's more about how long the game lasted. No crashes, and the lag was bearable. Everyone had a blast. I am no longer a Dukematch virgin. Speaking of which, it's still Friday night and a quick trawl of the different rooms shows that there are over 200 people currently playing or chatting. At least I'm not just a Lonely Guy spending Friday night by himself. I'm a Lonely Guy spending Friday night by himself while connected to 200 other Lonely Guys spending Friday night by themselves.



I think the laundry should be done by now.

I could also play Command & Conquer, Terminal Velocity, Warcraft, and even Quake on TEN, but there are more services to try and I fancy a change of scenery, a change of speed, and a change of game. So it's off to the Mplayer Web site (**www.mplayer.com**) to nab some connection software. Once I download it, I can set up an account, but that should wait until tomorrow—there's probably some late movie in need of my attention.



Conquering the World Before Breakfast

Saturday morning, 9 a.m.: Why am I up this early on a weekend? Definitely some bug—there's no other explanation for my being awake at this ungodly hour. Mpath awaits.

9:10 a.m.: I begin the setup procedure.

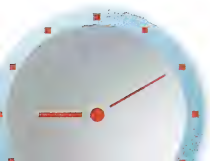
9:11 a.m.: An upgrade is required, and a patch to enable me to play C&C.



C&C's AI problems are fully overcome by playing against opponents—even if you're dumber than the computer.

9:49 a.m.: Finally finished. BladesMan is created and I get to choose a little portrait that will sit above my name in all the chat areas. Naturally, I opt for the Union Jack. With everything set up, I'm informed that this online gaming is all about having a blast. We'll see.

9:55 a.m.: With a certain cheesy style that overdoes the audio components, the Mplayer software starts and I come to a chat area different from TEN's but similar enough to ensure that you get a feel for the protocols very quickly. Time to play.





Smaller rooms with their own chat sections allow more personalized discussions on Mplayer.

10:02 a.m.: I'm launched into my first two-player game of C&C. Unfortunately, I forgot to take any notice of the game parameters set up by my opponent. Very shortly I end up broke and in trouble. The death knell sounds all too soon.

10:18 a.m.: OK, I need to find out from my opponent what the deal is with setting games up. "So that was short and sweet, thanks, but how do you set up the game parameters?" I inquire.

Silence.

Fair enough. Perhaps my performance was so lacking I don't deserve any post-defeat hand-holding.

10:23 a.m.: A four-player game would be cool. I browse the rooms and find one waiting. I'm in. The game is set up. C&C launches, then we're "Waiting for connections." And waiting.

And waiting.

10:28 a.m.: Perhaps this isn't working. I kick out.

10:34 a.m.: Back in, another four-player game. Another wait. Still waiting.

10:40 a.m.: What's going on? Is it my connection? I decide to ask someone. Back to the chat room. Unfortunately, on Mpath people can set their own font sizes and colors for messages. Sounds cool, but you get idiots hogging your message window with multicolored 24-point text. It's impossible to follow the thread of a discussion. I hope they get this sorted out by the time they start charging. Big Type geeks not allowed.

10:56 a.m.: Does anyone have any idea why I might be having connection problems in four-player games?

"Was it about 30 minutes ago?" I'm asked. Yes. "Ah, the server was down." Oh, why didn't anyone from the admin side tell us that?

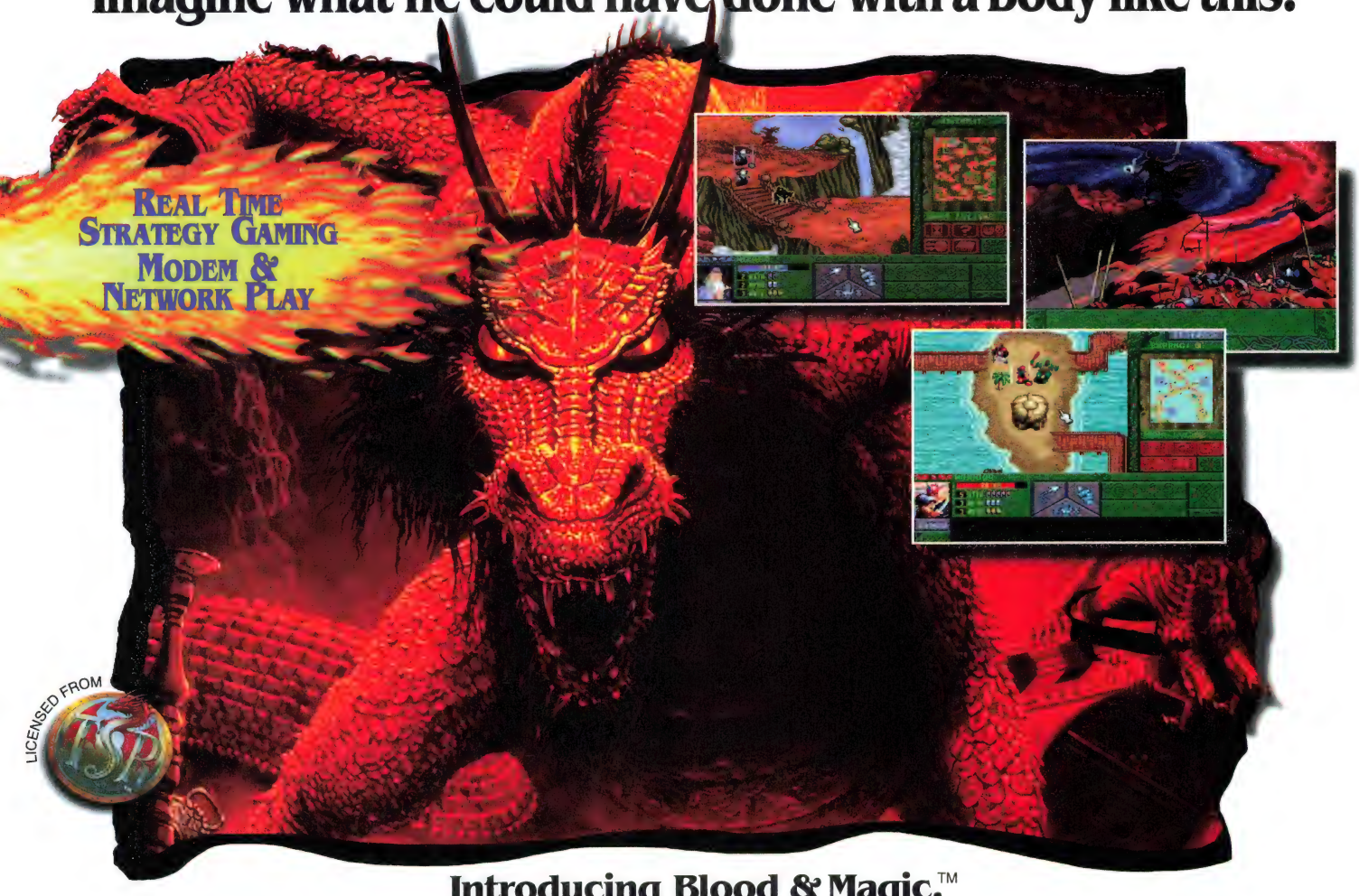
"Uhhh, dunno."

10:59 a.m.: Everything's fine now, apparently. We'll go again. This time the game has some rules: 2 on 2, fs, ht.

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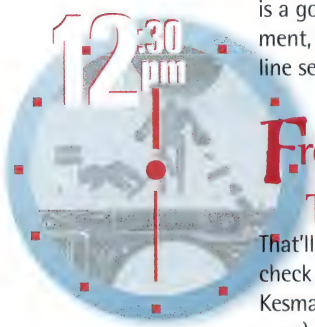
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'Scuse me? Turns out this is the lingo for two-on-two (I got that part figured out), first sight (you ally with the first team you come across), and a Harvester Treaty (no shooting at Harvesters). Seems that there's a club "language" to learn, but it all makes sense.

11:03 a.m.: Wow—it actually connects. First-sight rule in effect, so alliances are made. Building commences. Then some scumbag starts ragging on my Harvesters and before long I've none left. What about the treaty? "You shot at mine first." Oooh, excuuuuuse meee.

11:21 a.m.: The battle rages, but it looks like the fat lady is on her feet and clearing her throat. Mission failed.

Did I just play that online or over a LAN? No recognizable difference. The odd tiny pause was acceptable, but the bottom line was that C&C ran like a dream—once I was in. Some other crazy things happened: I heard voices. Not those irritating ones telling me to kill everyone, but other players through my speakers. It turns out that by simply plugging a microphone in, I can talk to these people. Very neat and very, er, unnecessary? The anonymity of being BladesMan is a good thing. Like a role-playing environment, I can be whoever I want on the online services.



From Mech Battles To Trivia Tests

That'll do for these new services. Time to check out some of the Web-based games at Kesmai (now Aries Online—**www.aries.com**). Multiplayer Battletech: Solaris sounds tasty. In fact, some breakfast sounds good.

12:30 p.m.: More downloading of software. One bowl of cereal.

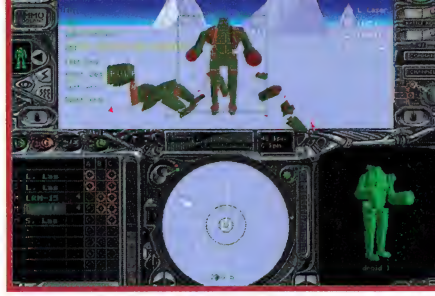
1 p.m.: Done. Time to set up. Turns out to be a breeze, and I'm in.



Use the icons in the lower-left corner to move around. MPBT gives you plenty of room for chat, and for incoming info.

Unlike TEN and Mpath, MPBT (as it's called by those in the know) tries to create an RPG context: There's a planet. There are streets and alleys, bars for chatting, and arenas for battle. There's even a subway system to take you from place to place. But I need some help.

Capt. HeroKiller comes to my rescue. Here's where to go, how to get there, and the best type of mech to begin with—every question answered. There are also morals and ethics in the BattleTech universe. Swearing is out and so is killing players on your own team. "More than 75 percent follow the moral code," HeroKiller informs me, "but the other 25 percent...they make some people so mad that their units have bounties on their heads!"



In the heat of Mech battle—I get smoked.

HeroKiller earned his captain rank by being a member of a Lance, within a stable. It all seems very well-organized.

1:20 p.m.: Off we go for a spot of one-on-one. HeroKiller kindly talks me through all the commands before turning me into a smoldering slag heap. Nice guy.

I could stick around and find out about the other Aries games, including Harpoon Online, but there are still other places to explore.



There are tons of options in the games area of AOL.

1:50 p.m.: I log on to my AOL account. This source of e-mail and news also hides some games. Among them is a role-playing game—GemStone III. Apparently it's pretty good. Wonder how long the download will take this time? Go: GemStone.



Entering the fantasy world of GemStone is quick and easy.

1:53 p.m.: I'm in. My character is created. Galgorth Lonthron, male human fighter, is alive and well in the GemStone universe. Ah, this takes me back to the good old days of text adventures.

1:56 p.m.: After a short explore, it's clear that having all the commands at hand would be a good start; so would an idea of what I'm actually doing here. I download some off-line reading material so that when I re-enter the realm Galgorth will be equipped to deal with this strange fantasy land. I'll be back.

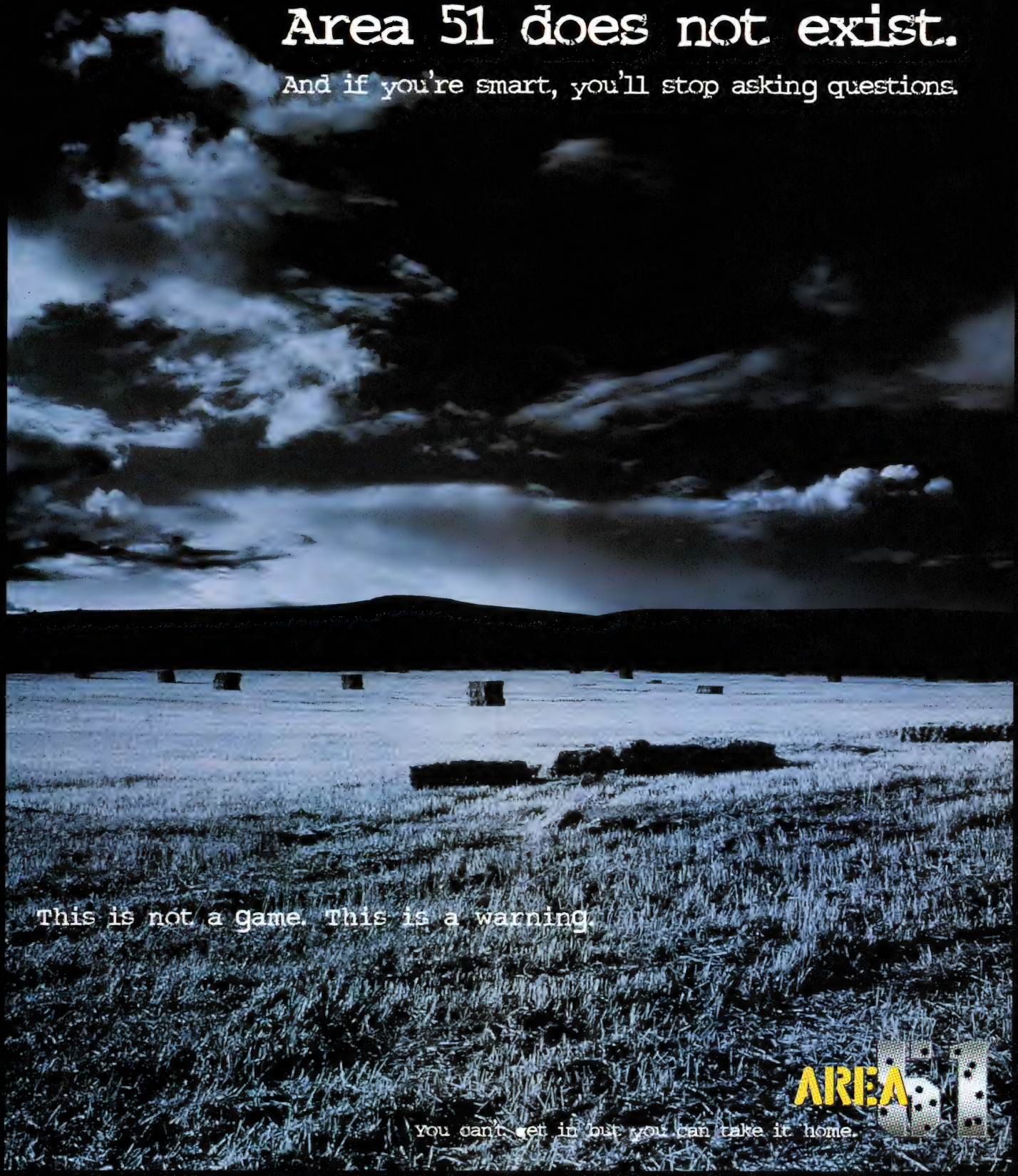
Perhaps something more cerebral would be a good change of pace from all the action.

2:15 p.m.: Still on AOL. Go: BrainBusters.

Seen those quizzes in bars—the multiple choice ones that offer clues and higher points for getting the

Area 51 does not exist.

And if you're smart, you'll stop asking questions.



MIDWAY.

The #1 Arcade game shows you what your government won't.

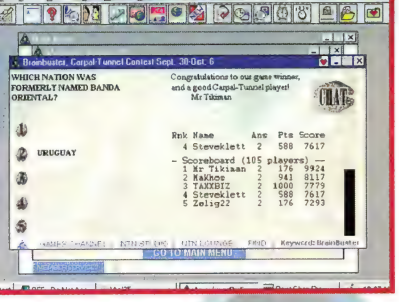
MATURE M AGES 17+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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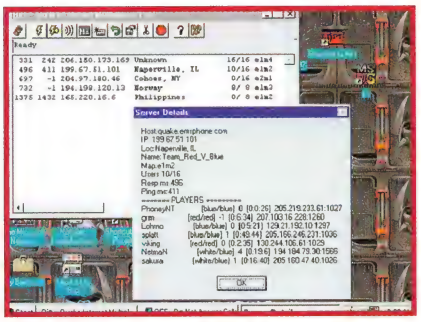
Fourth in the Brainbuster quiz. Officially smart.

correct answer quickly? Well, this is the online version. I watch while the current game finishes. There's plenty of interest. By the end, over 100 people are taking part, so getting on that top-five leader board is some achievement. Well, he who dares...

2:30 p.m.: It's official: I'm the fifth smartest, with a whopping score of 9575.

2:33 p.m.: I go again.

2:48 p.m.: Ninth this time. Tougher questions. This is addictive. Go again? Er, no—I suddenly realize that it's 3 o'clock and I've been playing online games for nearly six hours. Where did it all go?



Rift provides some detailed info on the other people on a selected Quake server.

Time for a break. A caffeine fix is what I need now.

6 p.m.: Grocery shopping is completed. But while choosing between linguini and spaghetti, I realize that I haven't even touched Quake. I can bear the guilt no longer.

6:04 p.m.: On the Stomped Web site (**www.stomped.com**) I come across a couple of multiplayer utilities, Rift and Q-Spy, which search out servers running Quake games and let you join without going through the hassles of inputting ftp numbers. The 270K download for Rift is well worth it.



Expect manic action in Quake—even if the connections occasionally pause.

6:15 p.m.: I double-click on Rift and it launches my Internet Service Provider (ISP). Suddenly Quake servers are appearing on the list. I ping them and find one with the lowest time with a free slot—16 players are wanted in Illinois. Suddenly, I enter a mad, mad world. The red and blue teams are going at each other like maniacs. There are heads spiraling through the air, detached from their bodies, rockets exploding, and me standing there with no clue trying to figure out what the hell is going on.

6:20 p.m.: Time to join the big boys. Control is weird. There's a sensation of skating as I move. Push a button and nothing happens, release it and all of a sudden I'm moving. Moving right up until some red geezer peppers me with nails, and I'm mincemeat.

6:30 p.m.: This is taking some getting used to, but we're getting there. At least I'm on the leader board.

Some time later...

Time to quit—must have been a good hour of Quakeing. What time is it? 11:43 p.m. What? We've been through quite a few levels and quite a few new players, but I've been playing for how long? Get a life. Naughty laughs and squeals outside my window make it worse. Guess I ought to go to bed.

Naaah. Wonder who's on TEN at this time of night?

The Cold Light Of Day

So I've just burned two days of my life playing online games. No malls, no movies, no taverns, no sleazy glances, no sudden groping under the table. But new life has been breathed into Duke and C&C. And, after all, isn't that what it's all about? Besides, there was so much fun to be had wiping out other people, showing off my own skills, that I didn't even touch Big Red Racing, appearing soon on an Mplayer connection near you. Then there's MechWarrior 2 and Mercenaries with their multiplayer options. All the C&C clones—including the follow-up, Red Alert, and Activision's Imperium—are out soon. Blizzard's great Warcraft II and the forthcoming Starcraft are going to be available on battle.net (**www.blizzard.com**), a free server. Hey, who has time for dates?

The greatest sense I got from this lost weekend was the fact that I barely scratched the surface of online gaming. How many games didn't I play? There are those on CompuServe, DWANGO (**www.dwango.com**), and Kali (**www.axxis.com/kali**). Quakeworld, linking Quake servers around the world to id's central network, has just launched and will take this phenomenon even further. Ultima Online will debut next year as one awesome role-playing environment. And I didn't get to check out Meridian 59 or Engage's Rolemaster: MageStorm, some intriguing online RPGs due to launch sometime next year. Ah, the vagaries of the online timeline.



Web-based online options at DWANGO and Kali.

Seems that those game gurus have got it right. Online gaming is the future for me. ■

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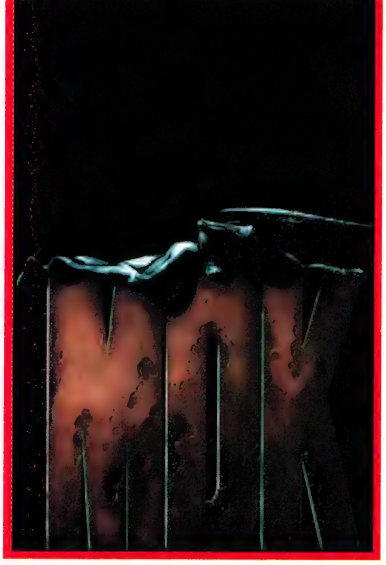
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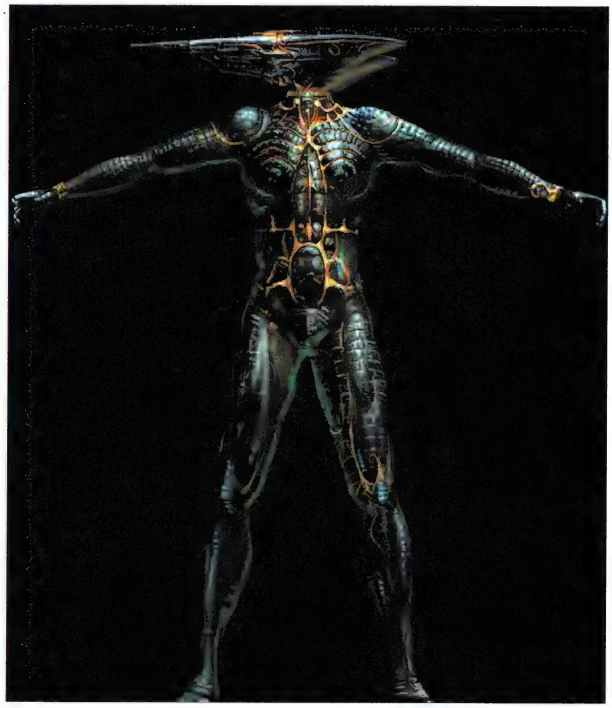


GUIDED TOUR

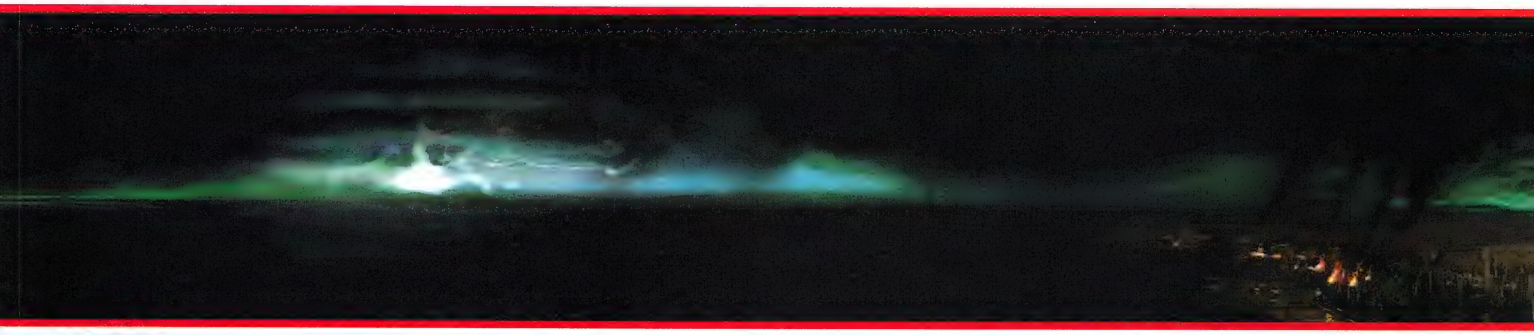
Murder Death Kill

By Rob Smith

The future of 3D gaming? The makers of Earthworm Jim reckon they have this gameplay concept sussed. The evidence so far suggests they may just be right....



Topping the success of Earthworm Jim, the classic worm-turned-superhero platformer, is no easy feat. But that's not stopping the dedicated team of writers, producers, and artists at Shiny Entertainment. Led by Dave Perry, one of the game industry's most recognizable figures, Shiny is developing MDK, a futuristic 3D action/adventure that could set a new standard for PC gaming.





To offset the game's violent theme, Shiny jokes that the title, MDK, stems from the story's three principal characters: Max, Dr. Fluke Hawkins, and Kurt. But everyone knows the initials really stand for Murder Death Kill. That doesn't mean it's all blood and guts: Given Shiny's creation of a video-game character in Earthworm Jim who has since moved on to cartoon stardom in his own TV show, it should come as no surprise that MDK has its own less-than-serious elements in the plotline.

It goes something like this: Energy streams were discovered close enough to Earth to be used for the benefit of mankind. These streams were a miraculous find, offering a free source of energy to solve many of our conservation problems. But here comes the hitch…

The streams were also freeways for a race known as the Stream Riders. These creatures visited Earth and brought with them eight moving cities that crushed our planet's population centers. Mass chaos reigns supreme, and the outlook for humanity is remarkably bleak.



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MATURE M AGES 17+

DOS CD-ROM

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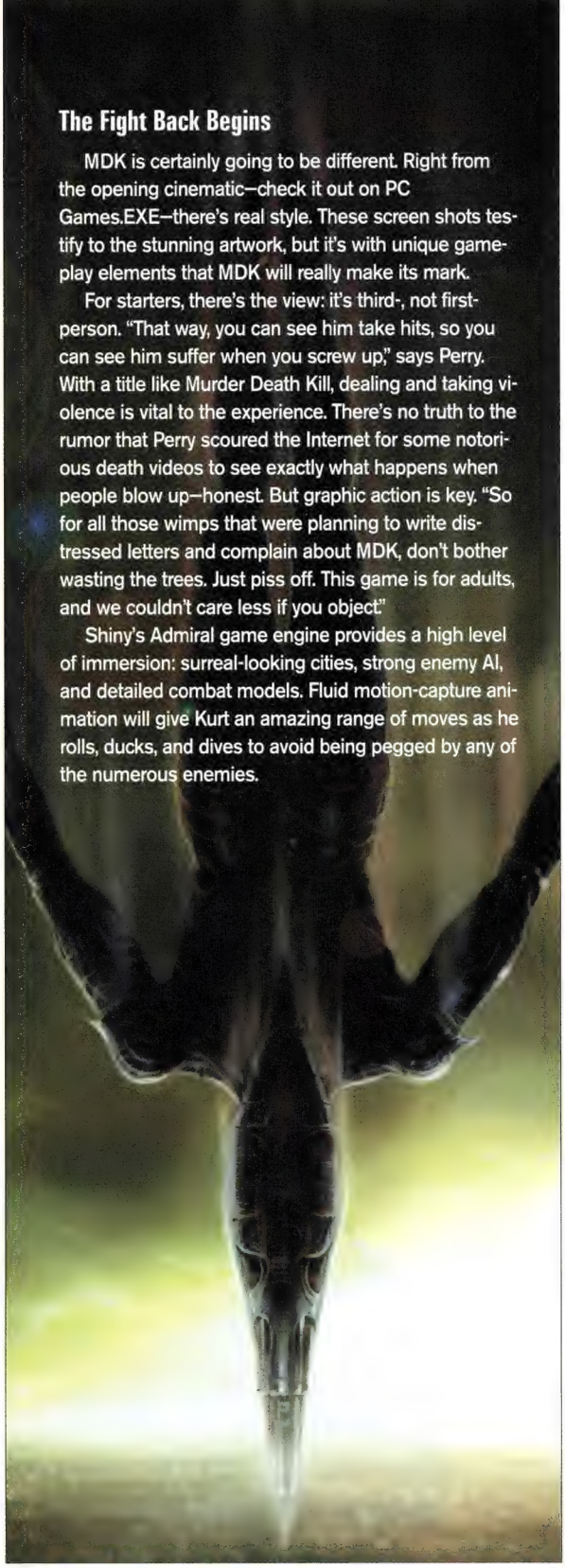
Acclaim® entertainment, inc.

The Fight Back Begins

MDK is certainly going to be different. Right from the opening cinematic—check it out on PC Games.EXE—there's real style. These screen shots testify to the stunning artwork, but it's with unique gameplay elements that MDK will really make its mark.

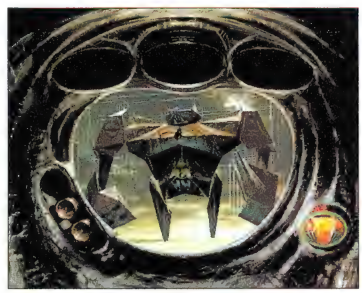
For starters, there's the view: it's third-, not first-person. "That way, you can see him take hits, so you can see him suffer when you screw up," says Perry. With a title like Murder Death Kill, dealing and taking violence is vital to the experience. There's no truth to the rumor that Perry scoured the Internet for some notorious death videos to see exactly what happens when people blow up—honest. But graphic action is key. "So for all those wimps that were planning to write distressed letters and complain about MDK, don't bother wasting the trees. Just piss off. This game is for adults, and we couldn't care less if you object."

Shiny's Admiral game engine provides a high level of immersion: surreal-looking cities, strong enemy AI, and detailed combat models. Fluid motion-capture animation will give Kurt an amazing range of moves as he rolls, ducks, and dives to avoid being pegged by any of the numerous enemies.





The white boxes in the background (below) highlight hit locations used by most 3D game engines. These rectangles allow some degree of inaccuracy that won't exist in MDK. Shiny's game engine will mean that accurate shooting is vital—missing by a millimeter really is missing by a millimeter, not just missing some hit-location box.







Using a small nuclear device to open a barred door may seem like overkill, but hey—do you want it open or not?

In the vastness of space, there is hope. Dr. Fluke Hawkins' assistants—Kurt and Max, a genetically engineered dog—bring these events to the Doctor's attention. He seizes the opportunity to test an arsenal of destructive devices he's developed, using Kurt as the guinea pig.

"The World's Smallest Nuclear Explosion," "The Human Mortar," "The World's Most Interesting Bomb," "Anti-Radar Spray Paint," and a bullet-repelling body suit are just some of his useful toys. The alien threat prompts the Doctor to bring these devices out of mothballs, hand them to Kurt, and say, "Go get 'em."

You, of course, are Kurt, and must rid the world of the alien threat by any means necessary.

THE FIRST TIME

YOU DID IT

YOU WERE EXCITED,

FRUSTRATED AND

YOU LASTED ABOUT

10 SECONDS.

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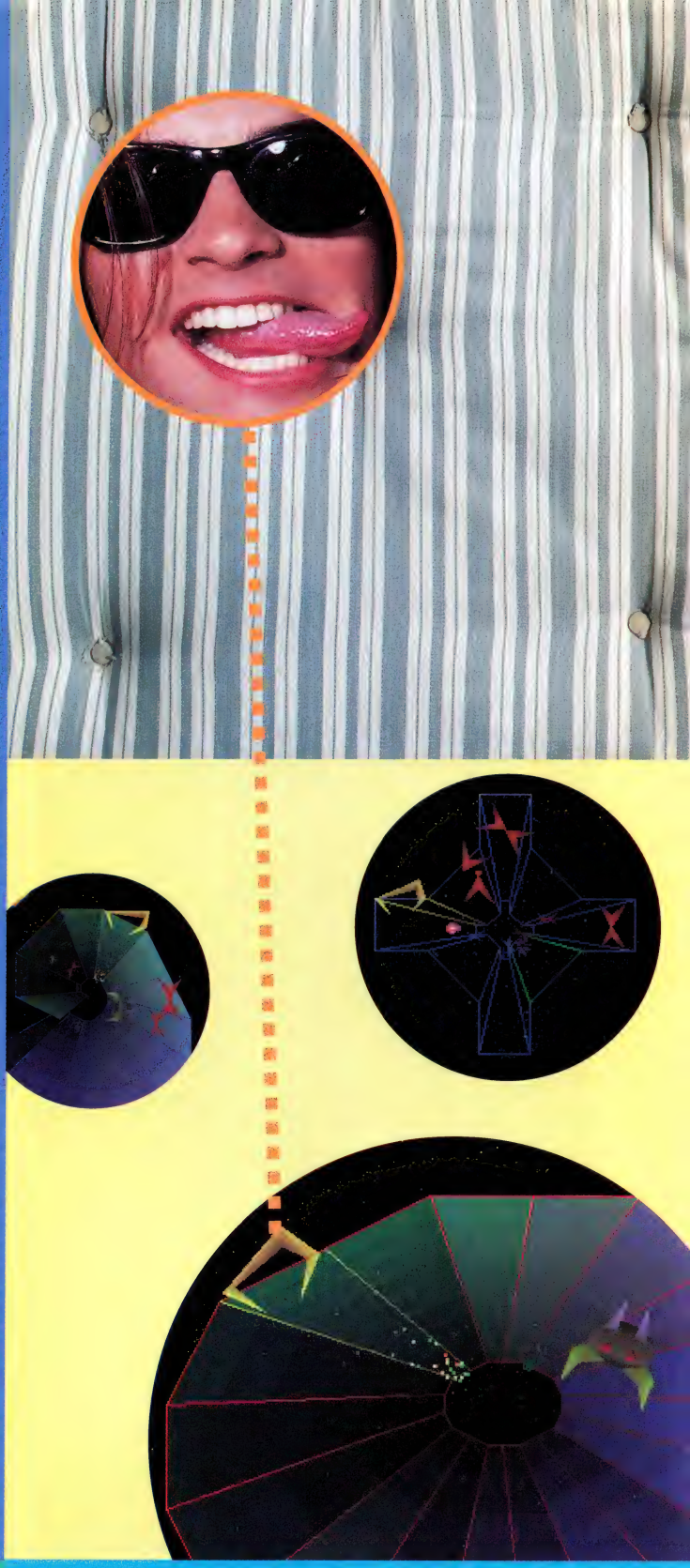
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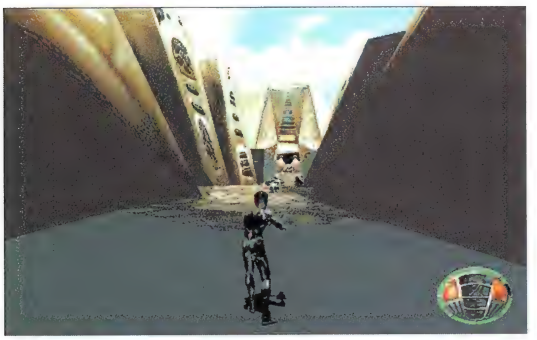
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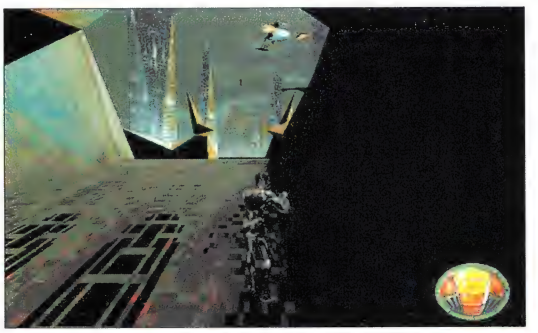
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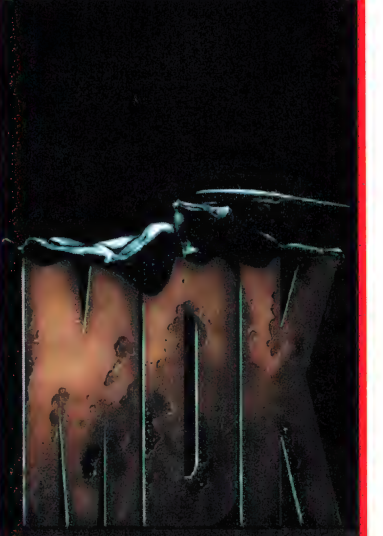
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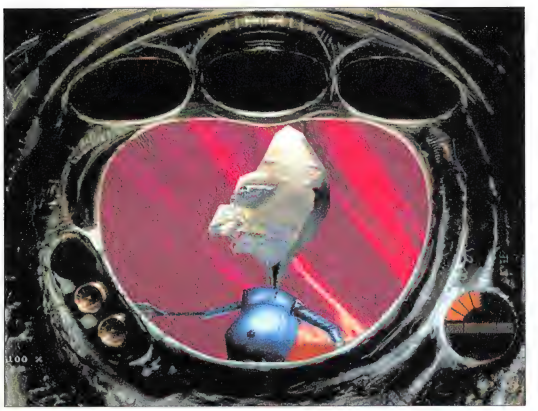
SATURN, MACINTOSH, AND WIN '95.





The new world of 3D games, graphics, and accelerators has introduced new concepts to the programmer's art. Often in games, buildings and objects miraculously appear out of an empty background in a pop-up effect that's far from realistic, and can make some aspects of gameplay confusing. Bullfrog took the first step forward with Magic Carpet's fogging—when the sudden appearance of objects is masked by a fog effect. MDK goes further still by having no pop-up effect—everything within viewing range is visible.





A target's profile stands proudly in the sniper view.



Now minus nose with a well-aimed bullet.

In sniper mode, the main view will show the object targeted. Above that is a small window that contains a bullet cam. Used with homing weapons, this view will also allow you to see ammo fly to and then through its intended target.

Kurt's helmet is the key to success. Using its abilities as a telescope rather than carrying it constantly as a firearm is vital for getting a sense of position and strategy in this world. A great deal of information about the surrounding area can be garnered from this view.

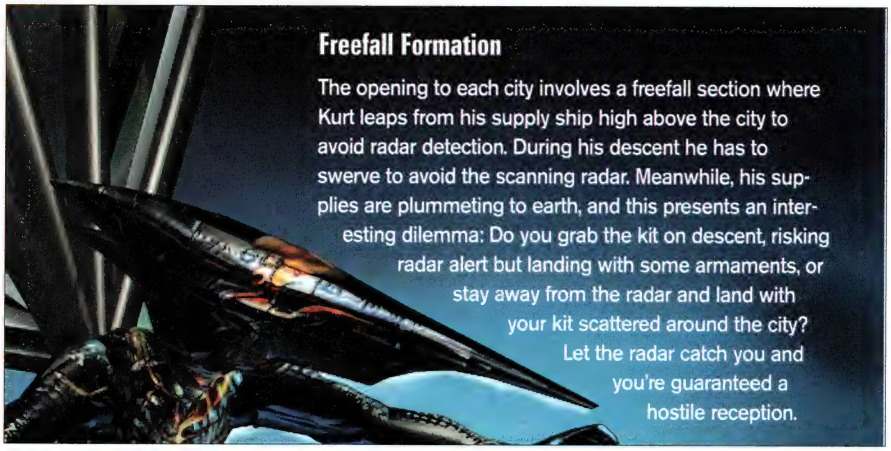






Dealing with enemy intelligence is a key part of the strategies Kurt needs to employ throughout MDK. Directed by sentries posted high above the city, aliens will have their own personalities when responding to orders and surrounding events. For instance, if Kurt gets the upper hand, the enemy may decide to leg it from the scene; he may succumb to the pressure and beg for mercy; or perhaps he'll just give up the ghost and fall into a gibbering wreck at your feet. Because the enemies will be working in teams, getting past certain areas will require far more cunning than simply blowing away everything in sight—though that could be pretty good fun, too.





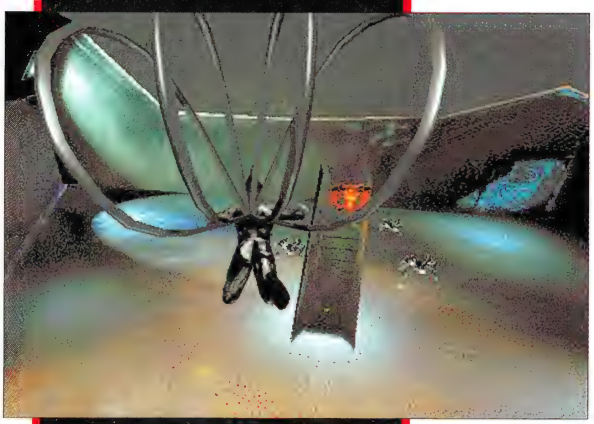
Freefall Formation

The opening to each city involves a freefall section where Kurt leaps from his supply ship high above the city to avoid radar detection. During his descent he has to swerve to avoid the scanning radar. Meanwhile, his supplies are plummeting to earth, and this presents an interesting dilemma: Do you grab the kit on descent, risking radar alert but landing with some armaments, or stay away from the radar and land with your kit scattered around the city? Let the radar catch you and you're guaranteed a hostile reception.





If the radar catches Kurt while he's falling, he'll have to dodge a volley of missiles.

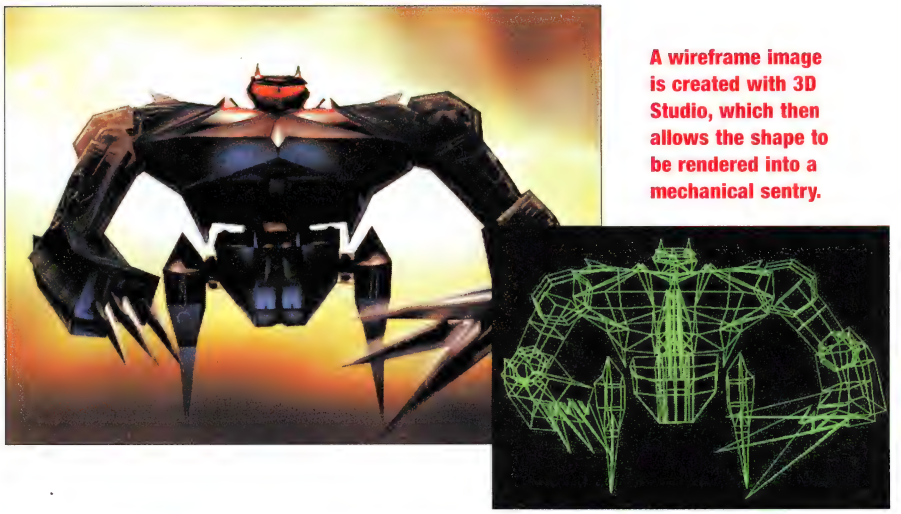




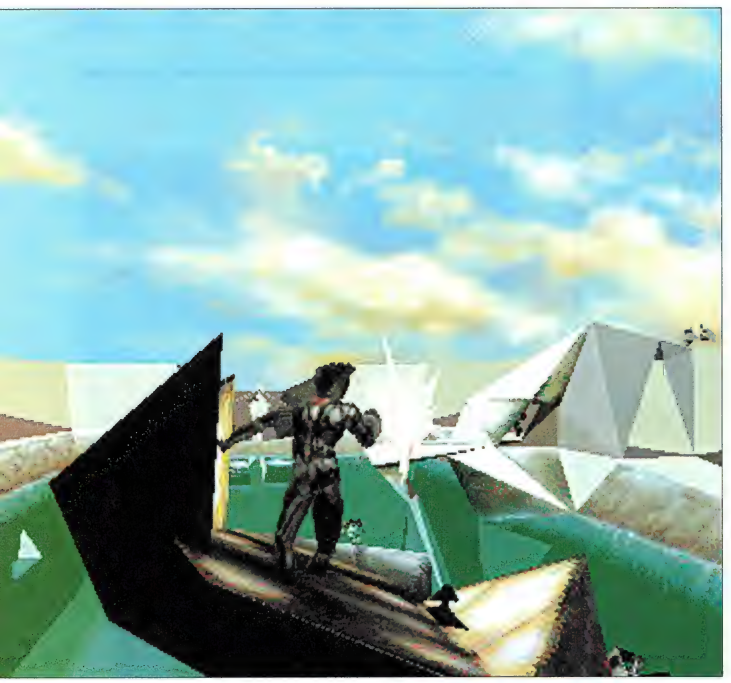
Floating down on the chute provides an opportunity to assess the reception committee (above)—or potential doom.

Speed and Sound

Shiny's not in favor of the option of turning off graphic detail for people with something less than a top-ninja PC. Instead, they've got what they think is a better idea—design the game, the textures, and the movements so they move fast on any Pentium PC. If there's a slow-down at any point, that area is redesigned, objects moved or textures adjusted—whatever it takes to sustain the desired 30-frames-per-second motion. Because everything happens in memory and there's no FMV, a single-speed CD drive will suffice.



A wireframe image is created with 3D Studio, which then allows the shape to be rendered into a mechanical sentry.





Kurt maneuvers through a stunningly detailed 3D world. The city scenes could have been simple, basic backdrops to the action, but their rendered detail is more than just eye candy.

Shiny has developed its own 3D sound software to help set up the sense of perspective. Distant events, though visible through the zoom function in the helmet, will sound like they're happening far away.

Although not set for release in the U.S. until around March of next year, MDK is already one of the most hyped and anticipated games of '97 thanks to the impressive sneak peeks afforded a few fortunate people at trade shows. After reading this Guided Tour, we think you'll agree, it's not hard to see why. (Playmates Interactive Entertainment; www.shiny.com; Win 95 CD)

Kurt will be in a dynamic environment, which means he'll need to steal vehicles and move objects to reach previously inaccessible places.



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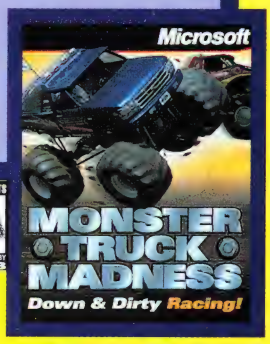
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KIDS TO ADULTS
K-A
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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The PC GAMES A List

See the complete 1996 and 1995 A Lists at www.pcgamesmag.com

includes the top 20 titles that we've rated as either an A or A- (or the equivalent) in 1996.

Afterlife
Outrageous humor and stunning graphics make this SimCity clone heavenly. (LucasArts; 800-782-7927; DOS/Win 95 CD; $54.95)

Silent Hunter
An addictive submarine simulation that blends technical seamanship with visceral thrills. (SSI; 800-601-7529; DOS CD; $55)

Duke Nukem 3D
Quake's rival for the top first-person action shooters—especially in multiplayer mode. (FormGen; 800-367-6436; DOS CD; $39.99)

Terra Nova: Strike Force Centauri
Awesome sound effects and a compelling story help make Terra Nova the most immersive combat experience around. (Virgin; 800-874-4607; DOS CD; $59.95)

Links LS
As close to a real game of golf as you can get—provided you've got a speedy Pentium. (Access Software; 800-800-4880; DOS/Win 95 CD; $79.95)

Bad Mojo
Love it or hate it, you've never played an adventure game as a cockroach before. (Pulse Entertainment; 310-264-5579; Win CD; $54.95)

The Pandora Directive
Tex Murphy returns in this engaging sequel to Under A Killing Moon. (Access Software; 800-800-4880; DOS/Win 95 CD; $49.95)

QUAKE
Right now, it's the hottest, bloodiest 3D action game. (id Software: 800-434-2637; DOS CD; $45)

THE NEVERHOOD
This claymation adventure is an artistic masterpiece. (DreamWorks Interactive; 310-234-7000; Win 95 CD; $54.95)



Zork: Nemesis
The latest Zork once again redefines adventure gaming. (Activision; 800-477-3650; DOS/Win 95 CD; $49.95)

AH-64D Longbow
For serious chopper-sim aficionados, Longbow's a must-buy. (Origin Systems; 800-245-4525; DOS CD; $59.95)

Screamer
This PC racer gives console driving games a run for their money. (Virgin; 800-874-4607; DOS CD; $54.95)

Wing Commander IV: The Price of Freedom
Everything you could ask for in a space sim game—and then some. (Origin Systems; 800-245-4525; DOS CD; $55)

Civilization II
A wonderfully compelling upgrade of the strategic conquest classic. (MicroProse; 800-695-4263; Win CD; $48.99)

Close Combat
A revolutionary tactical-level military sim that's reason enough to have Win 95. (Microsoft; 800-426-9400; Win 95 CD; $44.95)

Fantasy General
The newest entry in the General series offers solid wargaming from start to finish. (SSI; 800-601-7529; DOS CD; $50)

MissionForce: Cyberstorm
Turn-based strategy games don't get much better than this. (Sierra On-Line; 800-757-7707; Win CD; $59.95)

Star Control 3
This long-awaited sequel is sure to please strategy fans. (Accolade; 800-245-7744; Win 95/DOS CD; $49.95)

Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness and Beyond the Dark Portal
A classic strategy game, made even better with 24 new scenarios in the add-on disc. (Blizzard Entertainment; 800-953-7669; DOS CD; Tides of Darkness, $50; Beyond the Dark Portal, $30)

Z
Real-time wargaming with excellent AI and lots of humor. (Virgin; 800-874-4607; DOS CD; $54.99–$59.99)

How We Rate Games

PC Games uses a letter-grade system to rate games. Everyone who's gone to school knows what our grades mean without resorting to an in-depth explanation or clever chart: an A+ is the best score possible and an F is a complete bust. To give you a better feel for the overall quality of a title, we rate each game in five key areas.

GAMEPLAY:	How good are the game's interface and control scheme, and how much fun is it to play?
GETTING STARTED:	How much reading, studying, and hardware-tweaking are required before you can start to have fun? (The less the better.)
GRAPHICS:	How advanced and attractive are the game's visual elements, and how well do they match the game?
SOUND CHECK:	How good are the game's sound effects and musical score, and how well do they fit the game?
OVERALL GRADE:	Taking everything into account, how strongly do we recommend the game for purchase?

More than your average C&C clone

7th Legion

By Peter Olafson

PREVIEW!



Your basic 7th Legion base.

Westwood's lucky that computer games can't get sued for paternity. Command & Conquer has been leaving offspring in its wake with a fertility typically reserved for sperm donors and rock stars. Lately, some of the acorns are falling pleasantly far from the tree.

Consider 7th Legion from New Zealand developer Vision Software (best known for Amiga games such as Seek & Destroy, Woody's World, and Roadkill). They've got their own angle on Dad's legacy, and so far, the results are most heartening.

On the surface, this Windows 95 work-in-progress, slated for release early next year, is a page ripped from the Dune II/ C&C manual. It's Sim Military Base with an animated tactical wargame attached. Once again, you're clicking on icons, placing buildings (command center, barracks, vehicle factory, the works), using them to build an army, and sending the army out to get The Other Guy. (Or guys: You'll be able to play 7th Legion solo or via modem, network, and the Internet.)

Some other pages are less familiar. For one thing, Epic's put in vehicles that look more like modeled miniatures than sprites. You'll find the usual tanks and bigger tanks, but there's also mechs—multiple types, in fact, including one with shoulder-launched missiles that leave smoke trails.

The enemy is smart, too. Or, at least, smarter than the average C&C foot soldier (which, admittedly, isn't saying much). After having an assault torn to shreds by the thicket of gun turrets guarding the way to my base—fuel-fed explosions all over the place—the enemy sent in one of those missile-firing mechs that stayed safely out of turret range and started methodically picking off my defense emplacements one by one.



A squad of experienced mechs (see the little stripes?) opens up on a red base.

You won't find any monotonous resource-management here—there's no harvesting raw materials to generate cash flow. Instead, you're paid according to a budget and for what you destroy, with big bonuses for fulfilling time-sensitive requests from on high. This has the side effect of making 7th Legion much more of an action game. You don't have to look over your shoulder at where your next meal is coming from and, therefore, can focus on the destruction at hand.



Looks like the lizard-riders have spotted some tasty enemy morsel.

To complement this focus, the designers have added another arcade touch: powerups. These gray crates appear at various locations across the landscape, granting the finder special abilities ranging from rapid fire to double damage to invincibility.



Put a fork in the red side. He's just about done.

At the same time, they've thrown in a couple of role-playing touches. Units now advance in rank with combat experience. The higher the rank, the faster the unit, and the better its ability to take damage and dish it out. This is a big step: There's finally an incentive not to just throw troops into the meat grinder, but instead to shuttle them back to repair bays and hospitals so they can fight another day.

Finally, there are cards. That's right, cards. These cards represent secret weapons and periodically appear as icons in the screen's upper righthand corner. You can click and drag them to the target—with pyrotechnics usually the result.

This reminds me of games like Risk, and the effect is to remove some of the inevitability that accompanies arms build-ups in C&C-type games. It's really not over until it's over: A card judiciously played can pull your sizzling fat from the fire, and one played judiciously against you can ensure that you tumble into the flames after it.

And who knows what else will turn up when 7th Legion appears early next year? I played an alpha version—essentially, the game system with a few missions to give it shape and character—and the game itself was still deep in development. But I'm enormously encouraged by what I've seen—and continue to play—and can't wait for the finished game. Dad would be so proud.

Publisher: Epic MegaGames
800-972-7434
www.epicgames.com/
Platform: Win 95 CD
Available: Early 1997







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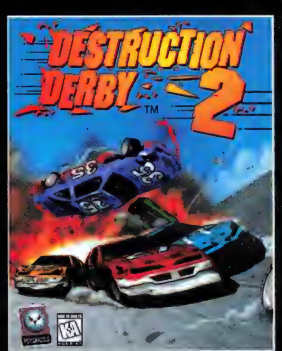
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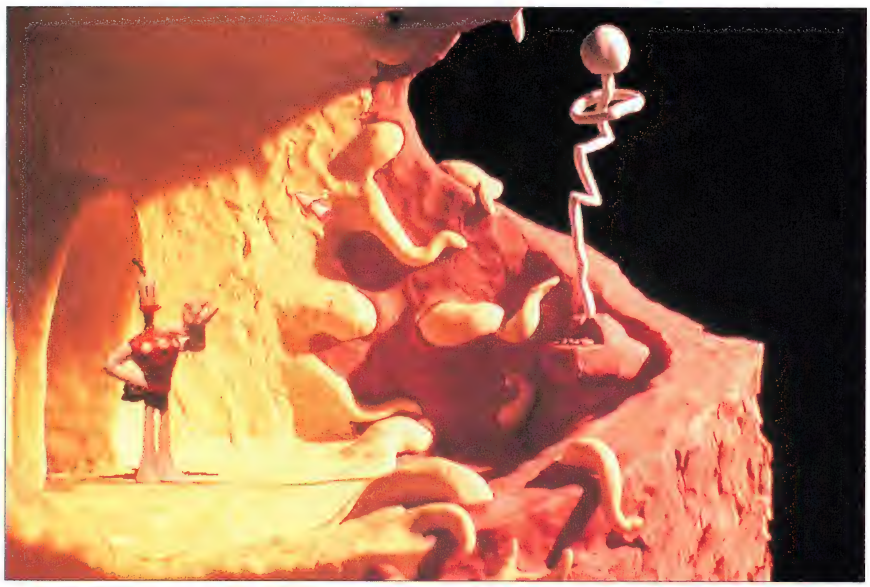


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A curious wad of klay finds his soul

The Neverhood

By Daniel Morris



Tons of clay were used to animate The Neverhood's sets.

Good computer games are magic, plain and simple. The Neverhood reminds us why.

DreamWorks Interactive's first major title ranks among the most visually innovative and satisfying adventure games seen in a long, long time. In an era where "creativity" means finding new accessories to add to a firearm, The Neverhood offers gamers a unique opportunity to experience something completely different—and enchanting.

We've all seen Claymation, even if only in old Gumby TV shows. Those who have seen the Oscar-winning "The Wrong Trousers" (featuring the inimitable Wallace and Gromit, director Nick Park's second successive Oscar success after the groundbreaking "Creature Comforts") saw Claymation at its best—where gifted artists sculpt compelling worlds out of clay, animating fascinating characters and hilarious action.

The Neverhood is entirely stop-frame animated, from top to bottom. The sets, incorporating tons of clay, filled a warehouse. And what sets they are. The creativity of the environments knows no end. Set in a magical fantasy realm of unbridled imagination, The Neverhood twists and turns, delights and surprises.

The game bears the stamp of Earthworm Jim creator Doug TenNapel, and it shows. Klaymen's exaggerated, doltish movements and contorting facial expressions in the cinematics are very reminiscent of that buff superhero.

It's a similar weird, wild world, too. Bizarre structures dot the twisted clay landscapes. Each is a treasure trove of mystery and riddle, and, in keeping with the best traditions of such fairy tales, the solutions to many of the puzzles are much simpler than the convolutions you're tempted to impose on them.



Beyond that tile puzzle lies the fascinating history of the Neverhood.

And this fantastic world is populated by the strangest of characters.

Among them is Klaymen, a simple sort of fellow who has the misfortune of being roused awake by your first mouse click of the game. His peaceful slumber is to be short-lived as he follows your prompting through the surreal playground of the Neverhood.

Along the way he'll have to rely on help from his Igor-voiced sidekick, Willie Trombone, and their automaton friend, Robot Bill.

It's all the work of Hoborg, the all-powerful (well, nearly all-powerful, as we'll soon learn) being who created the Neverhood and its inhabitants as a personal playworld. In a back story seen in pieces by playing various videotapes you collect along your way, Klaymen learns of Hoborg's loneliness and desire for companionship, which brought about the creation of the Neverhood. He molded this bizarre world out of klay, a magical substance with unlimited creative potential.

Among Hoborg's creations was Klogg, who was just supposed to be a buddy for Hoborg to hang out with. But what would a creation story be without a fallen angel? Desiring Hoborg's powers for his own, Klogg tricked his creator into imprisoning himself and seized the reins of power in the Neverhood, unleashing a horde of grotesque monsters to plague the landscape and torment the other inhabitants.

Now, as Klaymen, you are charged with rescuing the Neverhood from Klogg's

GAMEPLAY:	A
GETTING STARTED:	A-
GRAPHICS:	A
SOUND CHECK:	B+
OVERALL	A

Developer: The Neverhood
Publisher: DreamWorks Interactive
310-234-7000
www.neverhood.com
Platform: Win 95 CD
Requires: Pentium 75, 8MB RAM (16MB recommended), Super VGA, quad-speed CD-ROM drive, 8-bit sound card (16-bit rec.)
List Price: $54.95

Eye-popping Claymation and innovative design make this one of the best adventure games in recent memory.

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PSYGNOSIS

PC CD ROM

KRAZY IVAN™ FOR WINDOWS® 95

KIDS TO ADULTS
K-A
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clutches. The catch: Klaymen is soulless, a klay creation with no apparent will or ideas. And so throughout his quest, it will be part of Klaymen's growth to find his soul and divine the spark of life that separates lumps of clay from a fully-formed spiritual life.

It's also what separates The Neverhood from the heap of adventure/puzzle games that tend to pile up after a fit of half-starts and yawns. A game like this is an innocent treasure (a phrase we macho game-mag editors are reluctant to use, and privately hope our peers don't see in print). In Neverhood, progress is discovery, discovery is wonder, and wonder is revealing. It's the kind of revelation we had when we first sat down at a computer terminal and realized there was something going on up on that screen, and we were a part of controlling it. It's magic, plain and simple.

Here's what you won't find in the Neverhood: knives, guns, frags, telefrags, semi-nudes, fully nudes, swearing, or sadism.

Here's what you will find: environments you can look at forever, genuinely riotous laughs, and jaw-dropping sight gags.

Oh yeah, and puzzles, puzzles, puzzles. Sixty of them, in fact.

There are beasties that will send you scurrying, most notably a frightening creature encountered early on that resembles the evil scorpion monsters from *Howard the Duck* (or so I've been told by someone who admits to having seen it). Klaymen faces real and true dangers—heck, he almost gets eaten five minutes into the game! But he's usually able to solve the crisis with a cool head and we're able to get by with a few nervous laughs. Klaymen's panicked flight from a hungry monster early in the game is the funniest cinematic sequence I've ever seen.

It all takes place to the swinging beat of an original Dixieland ragtime soundtrack. It's the music Woody Allen neurotically bungles around to, and it makes a perfect cherry on top of The Neverhood.



You'll need a lot of ingenuity to solve each of the 60 puzzles.

One rating we don't give for games but perhaps should is "Effort." The Neverhood should make some developers pause and ask themselves if they're *really* committed to their work. With human hands and care crafted into literally every frame of The Neverhood, many of the slipshod video adventure games on the shelf behind me look twice as dull as before. It's obvious after 10 minutes of play that TenNapel and his crew were devoted to their creation like parents to a child. This game took lots of work and lots of dedication to produce. Every bit of it shows on every screen.



Don't be afraid to venture far out of your way to reach a goal.

With ray-casting, polygons, and texture-mapping occupying everyone's thoughts, it's a sweet treat to see a game like this come along and do it all with smoke and mirrors, in front of the camera, like the old filmmakers of the silent era used to do in the days before a director could just say "CGI it."

If I have any knock against the game, it's that sometimes there may be a little too much to look at and not quite enough to do. While the visuals themselves are well worth the price of admission, the fact that The Neverhood is also a fun, involving adventure game is occasionally compromised by the need to direct Klaymen through too-long stretches of inaction. Fortunately, the rewards at the end of those stretches are always enough to make the wait worthwhile.



The perils Klaymen faces tend to be more comical than ominous.

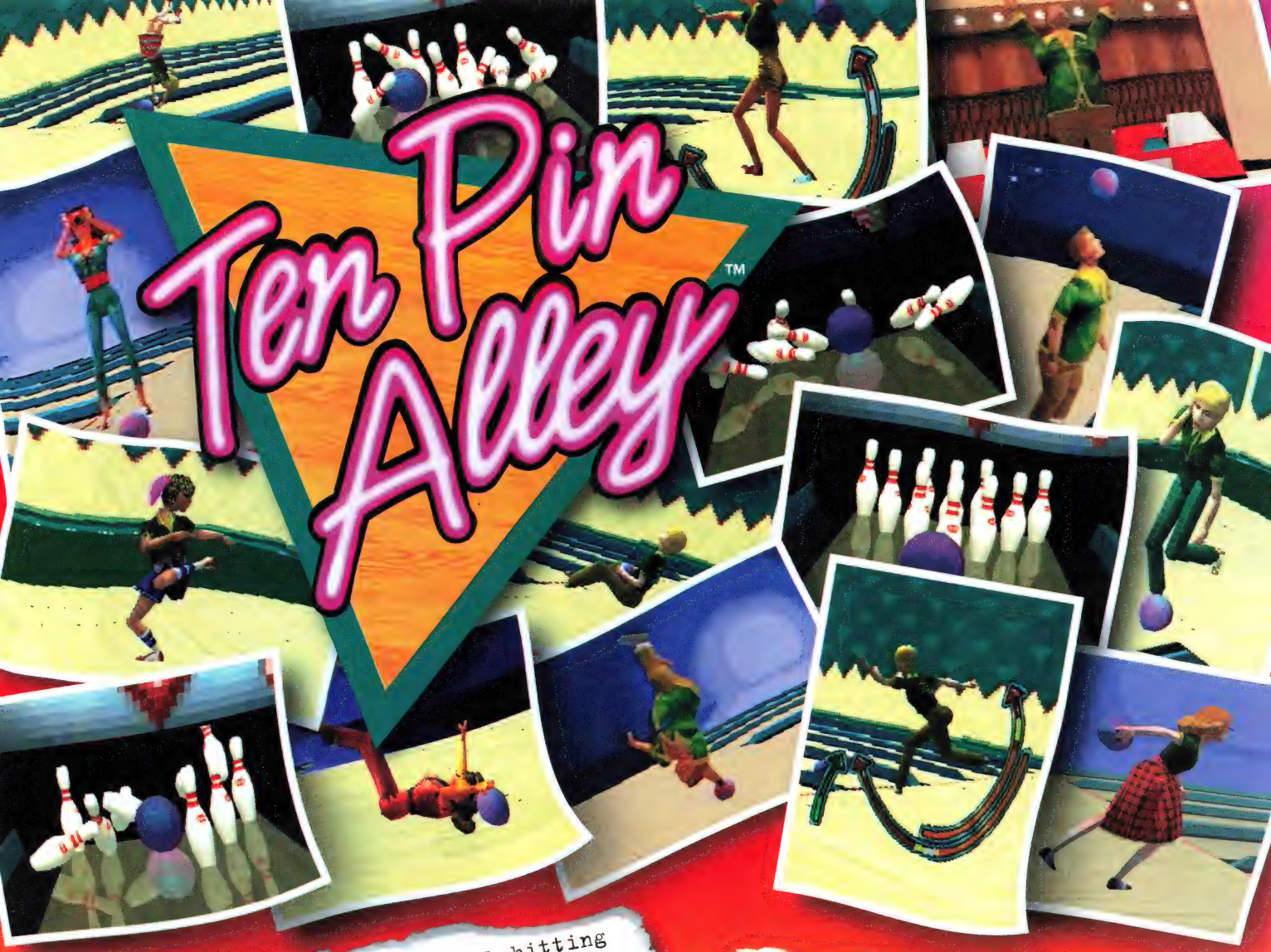


TIPS

• Klaymen will need a few pushes in the right direction to get his quest off on the right foot: Wake him up by clicking on him. Then batter the door down by tugging on the switch several times. • Use the Venus flytrap to escape the ring room. You'll need to position it just right to snap onto one of the rings to open the door. • Assemble a live TNT dummy by replacing dud limbs with fuses. • Find the jack-in-the-box and give it a crank. • Once you've seen what that does, you'll need to pick up the first incendiary object you can find to light the TNT dummy and save your butt.

From its opening menu to its final cinematic, The Neverhood marks a genuine step forward in design and storytelling in adventure games. What a breath of fresh air this is—I would recommend that adventure-game designers save the money they waste on Hollywood curmudgeons and cheesy video sequences, and start investing in gifted developers like The Neverhood (the name of the company as well as the game) with a unique idea and the sweat to make it happen.

The results are inspiring. The Neverhood is in its own league for innovative entertainment value in adventure gaming. Put it on your list.



The precise physics of your ball hitting the pins is so technically advanced and graphically dazzling, **you'll be bowled over!**

Lots of colorful characters, male and female, righty and lefty, each with their own unique styles.

Choose lane and alley designs: retro **Maui Bowl**, contemporary **Ten Pin Alley** or kill the lights at crazy late night **Conga Bowl.**

NO BOWLING SHOES REQUIRED

Sanctioned by

Bowling Hall of Fame and Museum St. Louis, Mo.

Developed by Adrenalin Entertainment

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Microsoft treads water

Deadly Tide

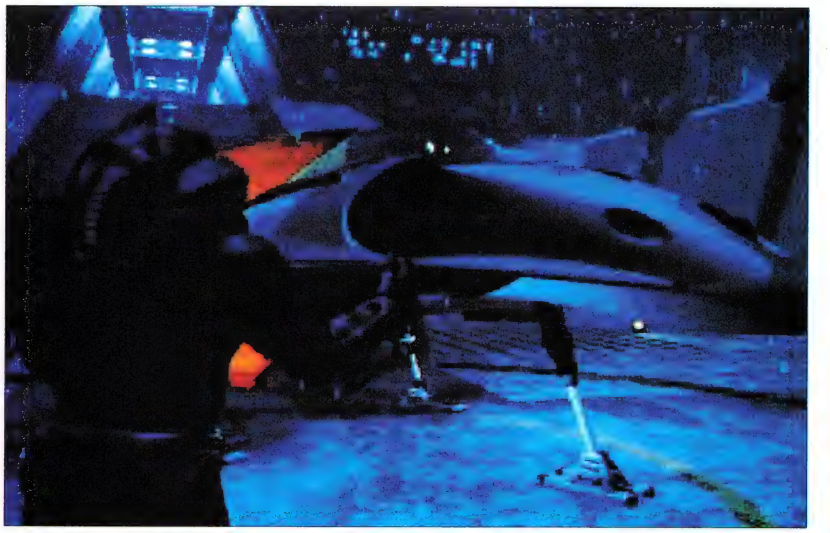
By Steve Klett

Deadly Tide, a new railed shooter from Microsoft, has all the trappings of a good sci-fi film: strong story, excellent graphics and musical score, and superb use of cinematography and special effects.

Unfortunately, it looks like Microsoft took the movie feel too far by making it possible to finish the game in less time than it would take to watch the *Star Wars* trilogy. Indeed, this is typical of games of this type—Rebel Assault I and II can be played through in a few hours as well—but considering that Deadly Tide ships on four CDs, its brevity is glaring.

Here's the story: It's the year 2500, and an aquatic alien race has come to Earth to reside on the ocean floor. At first it appears that man and alien can coexist peacefully; but, of course, that's not the case. The aliens are engaged in a sinister plot to raise the ocean levels slowly but surely—resulting in the eventual drowning of all mankind.

Since mutating a set of human gills is not a viable option, humanity fights the undersea threat with super-high-tech hydrofighters. Of course, there are just a few prototype hydrofighters, and you're one of the only qualified pilots, and, therefore, it's up to you to save the world...yadda, yadda, yadda.



It's up to you and your hydrofighter to save the world.



Impressive cinematics abound.

So you dive the depths in 14 missions to basically blast every alien in sight—and there are plenty of 'em to blast. Unfortunately, the number of different aliens isn't so big. There are only a half-dozen or so types of baddies, which makes targeting them tiring. About midway through the game, you want to see something new to blow up. To the designers' credit, there is a truly riveting segment near the midpoint of the game where you must take out a boss-type alien craft. More of these would have done wonders for the gameplay.

Again, Deadly Tide is a railed shooter, and, I confess, I like railed shooters. They're basic, arcade-style shoot-'em-ups that don't allow you to fully control the action, but take you on a scripted ride in which you frantically shoot everything around you and occasionally choose a path branch. Done in the right way—as in both Rebel Assaults and the first Cyberia—railed shooters can often provide good, old-fashioned, mindless fun.

At first, I thought Deadly Tide would go down as a classic. It is graphically beautiful, provided you have a decent video card and monitor, a Pentium, and at least 16MB of RAM. You really get a sense of being in a believably murky underwater environment. The game also has topnotch cinematics, and the addition of missions on foot, instead of in the hydrofighter, spices up the action.

Sadly, the game just sinks. Despite its superior production values, it's too technically demanding to recommend highly. And it's much too short, regardless of what Microsoft says about its replay value. Hopefully, the company will address at least the brevity issue in the sequel. Fans of Rebel Assault may like what they find here—a fast, furious ride with lots of visual thrills and a decent storyline—but if your list of gaming demands is longer, keep on swimming.



TIPS

- **Stay focused on the center of the screen when there are lots of baddies buzzing around. You can often get through a tough spot simply by firing away blindly at the middle of the action.**
- **Conserve your superweapon ammo for when there are a lot of aliens onscreen.**
- **Lead your targets when firing or you'll find yourself in a heap of trouble.**

GAMEPLAY:	C-
GETTING STARTED:	A
GRAPHICS:	B+
SOUND CHECK:	B
OVERALL	C-

Developer: Chaos Works
Publisher: Microsoft
800-426-9400
www.microsoft.com/games
Platform: Win 95 CD
Requires: Pentium 75, 8MB RAM (16MB recommended), Super VGA, quad-speed CD-ROM drive, sound card
List Price: $54.95

This shooter looks great, but takes a dive for short play length and lack of variety.



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Assassin 2015



You know your orders: kill at will.

Been there. Killed that.

Assassin 2015 is a first-person action shooter that admirably tries to be a story as well as a massacre. Though there are enough novelties to keep the jaded Doom-Duke-Quaker interested for awhile, it's ultimately just more me-too marauding.

It's the future. The city is always dark, no matter what time of day it is. Rain pours constantly from angry clouds. Cars choke the gloomy streets. And somewhere in the black heart of this industrial wasteland, somebody is getting ready to raise hell.

That somebody is you. Jack Butcher—ex-soldier turned bounty hunter, hired by the government to lower the boom on a renegade scientist. Moral standing: shaky at best.

In a dazzling cinematic intro, you slip into your prey's skyscraper headquarters and drop the hatchet on him during a major press conference. Within seconds, the corporation's security troops are on you—and it's time to pop caps.

The action is wrapped in a developing, unfolding plot that advances as you clear levels in the building. Your object is to reach the roof, where you can dust off in a waiting evac chopper. To get there, you have to frag your way through level after level of corporate chaos, clearing a trail through factory presses, offices, storage facilities, and more.

The graphics are good, not mind-blowing, and some of the enemies have touches of inspiration that distinguish them from pure lead fodder. The sound is impressive, mixing tech-noirish industrial rattle, furious weapon fire, and frenzied headset commentary from your remote assistant.

Ultimately, we've seen, done, and slaughtered everything in this game. Though it strives to deliver gun-baking mayhem, there's no way to put it in the category of Duke or Quake. Serious shooter fans looking for a little personality in their firefights may be interested, but Assassin is strictly a second-tier shoot-'em-up. —*Daniel Morris*

GAMEPLAY:	C+
GETTING STARTED:	B
GRAPHICS:	B
SOUND CHECK:	B+
OVERALL	C+

Developer: Blue Sky Software
Publisher: Inscape
800-741-3043
www.inscape.com
Platform: Win 95 CD
Requires: 486DX/66, 16MB RAM, quad-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $49.95

Looks good, sounds good, but we've seen most of it before.

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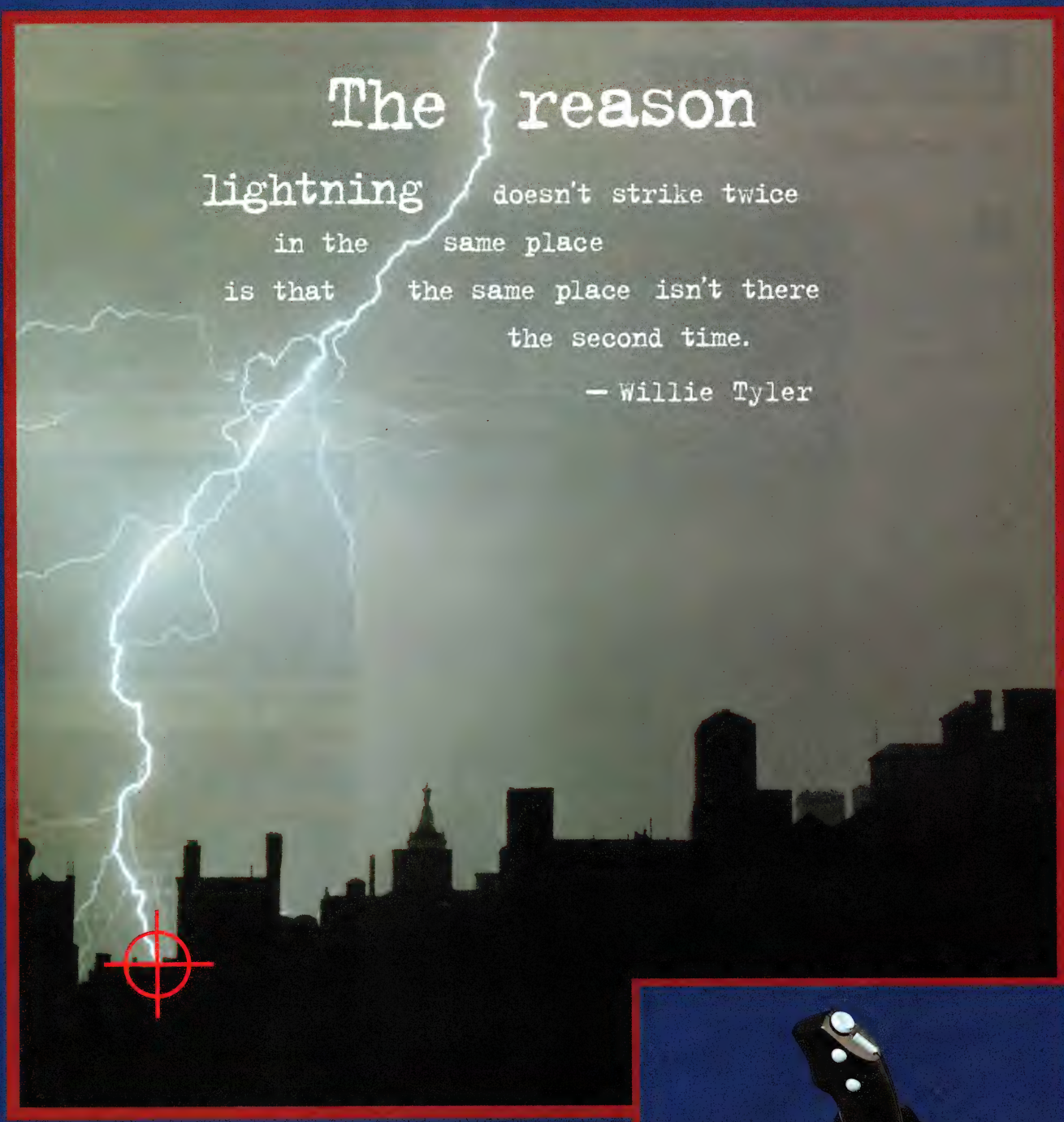
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Running Man *meets* Rollerball

DeathDrome

By Rob Smith

PLAY *the Demo on the disc*



Various colors give each prison a unique look.



Fusion Tower explosions send out destructive shock waves.

DeathDrome is a fast-paced, exciting action shooter that avoids the pretension of being anything more than a revved-up blastfest. Don't look for delicate nuance or multilayered strategy here. It's who can drive the best and who can shoot the fastest that counts.

The game does get off to a bad start with a storyline bereft of any semblance of originality. Here's the sketch: The year 2057 is upon us, and crime is huge. Super prisons throughout the world are overpopulated, but The Committee of Recreational Termination (CORT) has a plan. Criminals who impress the authorities with the intelligence to complement their ruthlessness are given the chance to earn their freedom in the DeathDromes.

So, let's see if we understand this: Bloodthirsty sociopaths are game-show contestants in a futuristic gladiatorial arena. No, it doesn't make much sense. Don't worry about it. Remember, it's driving and shooting that count. So, to earn your freedom (you are, of course, one of the sociopaths), you have to defeat all comers in eight very different Dromes with such names as Alcatraz II, The Abyss, and Purgatory.

In your choice of first- or third-person view, you hit the hotseat of one of eight Runners. Think of the light cycles from the sci-fi classic *Tron* as the inspiration for these fast, agile machines. Armed with a laser and Electro-Barrier, you ride against seven hostile inmates and must kill a certain number of them before making it to the exit. The number of required kills is increased by one on every stage, so the action gets tougher and tougher.

Each DeathDrome has four areas offering different challenges to test speed, agility, and the suppleness of your trigger finger. In the first of the three rounds, only two of the sections are open. Three are open in Round Two, and all four are available for the final round. Within these sections are secret rooms containing useful powerups that are accessed by picking up keys. Collecting missiles, nitros, ion swords, and disruptors is vital to your success, particularly since your opponents are blessed with a decent level of AI.

The one-player challenge may prove a little short for the more skilled and quick-fingered gamer, but then there's the multiplayer game. There's no modem play, but you can have at it over an IPX or TCP/IP LAN. It's always an eight-player game, so if it's just you and one other friend squaring off, the computer controls the other six Runners.

The DeathDromes and Runners look suitably futuristic, and there are some very cool explosions and effects in the heat of battle. Running in any resolution above the standard 320-by-200 is going to require a beast of a machine, and the higher resolutions don't really add much.

DeathDrome is one of those games that sneaks up on you without a barrage of hype and turns out to be just plain fun. Although it flirts awkwardly with a banal storyline, the game quickly sheds its clichés and steps out as a no-nonsense, straight-ahead adrenaline jolt. Amen to that.



As Runners go up in flames, so do their drivers.

TIPS

• Kill 'em fast! Get as many kills as you can right from the word "Go"—don't give the opposition a chance to power up. • Make sure you keep one eye on your HUD. It's incredibly well-designed, presenting all the information you need very clearly. • Use the health bars on the HUD to determine the weakest Runner, then go after him. • Missiles are the deadliest weapon, so stock up. • If you're being chased, shoot the Fusion Towers. Then be prepared to jump as the shockwave takes out your pursuer.



Use ion swords to drain energy from an enemy.

GAMEPLAY:	A-
GETTING STARTED:	B
GRAPHICS:	B
SOUND CHECK:	B-
OVERALL	B+

Developer: Zipper Interactive
Publisher: Viacom New Media
800-469-2539
www.viacomnewmedia.com
Platform: Win 95 CD
Requires: Pentium 75, 16MB RAM, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $49.95

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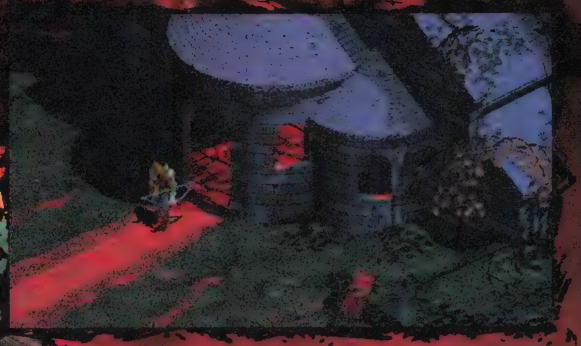
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Another Myst wannabe

Lighthouse: The Dark Being

By Jason D' Aprile



You can tell he's the badman—not only is he terribly unattractive, but he's also stealing that baby!



This dimension's counterpart to Dr. Krick has, it seems, come to an unfortunate demise in his picturesque watchtower.

For those of you who didn't like Myst, Zork: Nemesis, or the rest of that lot, it's page-turning time. Keep moving, folks—nothing to see here. Personally, I like to exercise the ol' thought processes after a hard day of Dukeing. Sierra's latest adventure, Lighthouse, is for fans of the adventure/puzzle game, and is likely to be a popular title among "Myst-alike" lovers.

The story goes something like this: You're a writer who rents a home next to the lighthouse residence of a reclusive scientist and his baby daughter. Unknown to you, your neighbor, Dr. Krick, is meddling with dimensional portals. After an urgent message from Krick to babysit his daughter, you rush to the lighthouse, where, of course, you proceed to rummage through all of his things (including opening his mailbox and helping yourself to his mail).

Hey—what's a federal offense when it means greater knowledge? Soon baby Amanda gets kidnapped by a dimension-hopping little tattooed guy, who, it turns out, is actually the Dark Being of the title. Pursue this foul creature, stop his evil plans to ravage an alien world filled with archaic technology, and rescue Amanda and Dr. Krick in the process.

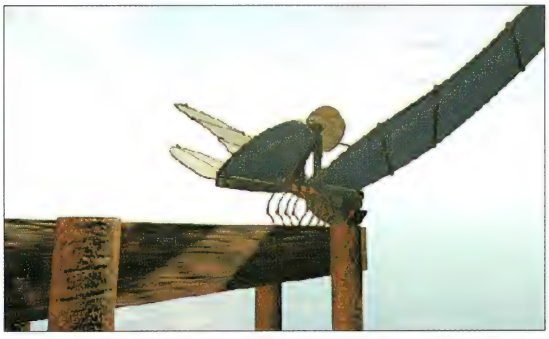
Lighthouse's game engine might as well be the same as Myst's. There's no Zork: Nemesis–like 360-degree rotation here—just frame updates with beautiful, partially animated scenery, and some cinematic cut scenes. Throughout the game, you'll find bizarre flying contraptions, submarines, a train, and teleportation devices that take you from place to place—though you barely have control over most of them. Except for some journal entries, the storyline rarely appears in the game, and when you meet a pitiful cyborg girl, Liryl, she proceeds to recount a story so steeped in messages of ecological strife and the dangers of pollution that you feel like you're attending an Al Gore rally.

The most interesting aspect of Lighthouse is its use of its non-player characters. There are a few creatures you meet who can actually meddle with your plans and force you to approach problems in a different way. Lighthouse is a game that, for once, actually has different pathways for many of its puzzles and obstacles.

The puzzles themselves are a mixed batch. The traditional logic and object-manipulation puzzles are competent and shouldn't overtax those who are used to this sort of thing. But the game relies too much on directional "puzzles." Trying to manipulate a submarine to get inside a sunken vessel proves far more trouble than fun, and the subterranean train puzzle is one of the most frustrating and overlong sequences I've ever seen in a graphic adventure. The mouse-pointer control is overly sensitive and relies upon targeting annoyingly precise hotspots.

The 3D-rendered scenes all look fantastic and the motion-captured animation is good. The sound effects are excellent, with suitable music, though a bit more melodic variety would have been nice. The game comes on two CDs and has separate installers for both Windows and DOS.

Lighthouse could be an enjoyable diversion for those who liked Myst, but much more care should have been put into the design structure. Too much of the game tests your patience instead of your logic. It may be challenging, and contain some intriguing contraptions and stunning environments, but the end result isn't as deep and literary as it could have been. Casual adventurers will want to stay well away.



An Ornithopter is one of several interesting machines you'll have to learn how to activate.

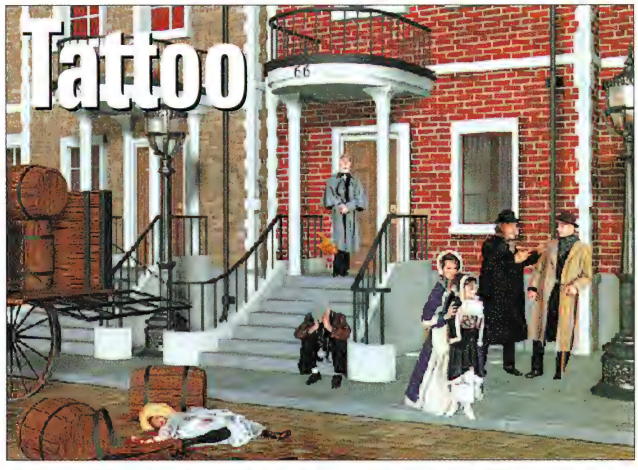
GAMEPLAY:	C+
GETTING STARTED:	B+
GRAPHICS:	A
SOUND CHECK:	B+
OVERALL	C+

Publisher: Sierra On-Line
800-757-7707
www.sierra.com
Platform: DOS/Win 95 CD
Requires: 486DX/50, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0 or Win 95, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, sound card
List Price: $59.95

Rather disappointing with some noticeable oversights, but still an evocative, atmospheric, and mysterious trip for hard-core fans of the graphic adventure/puzzle game.

The Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes: Case of the Rose Tattoo

By Peter Olafson



A typical Victorian London street scene—barrels, bodies, and bystanders.

There are few games I've loved without restraint or condition. The original Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes was one of them.

Four years later, a sequel has finally appeared—The Case of the Rose Tattoo—and, for me, playing it was like reclaiming a lost brother. This very grown-up animated adventure is as compelling as any I've played since the detective's last case.



TIPS

- **The first significant puzzle is getting Holmes into the game. To do that, you'll need to retrieve some residue from the clock face found in the second room of the bombed-out club.**
- **You'll need Mycroft's ring to get into the club. Send the attending nurse off for a glass of water and snag the ring.**
- **To get into the ward, you'll need to fake out Matron in the hospital lobby. Pretend you're going to the morgue.**

GAMEPLAY:	A-
GETTING STARTED:	A-
GRAPHICS:	A-
SOUND CHECK:	A-
OVERALL	A-

Publisher: Electronic Arts
800-245-4525
www.ea.com
Platform: Win 95 CD/DOS CD
Requires: 486/66, 8MB RAM (16MB for Win 95), DOS 5.0, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $59.95

Holmes' latest is one heck of a whodunnit.

The intro animation, a glorious tapestry-like street scene, leads us into Holmes' cluttered Baker Street digs, where the great sleuth has received an invitation to meet with his brother, Mycroft, at the Diogenes Club. Holmes and constant companion Dr. Watson have scarcely arrived at the front door when the place erupts in flames. Mycroft, muttering feverish riddles, is hospitalized. The fire brigade and police lay the blast's cause to a gas leak.

Holmes, however, never jumps to a conclusion, and even shuttered in his bedroom, grief-stricken over his injured brother, quickly discounts this easy solution. An initial investigation by Watson turns up a useful nugget, and Holmes is suddenly out of his funk and on the case. The game is indeed afoot.

And it hasn't changed in any material way. Oh, the graphics are much better. In fact, they're lovely—both overall and in the small touches like fog and rippling water. Moving to a new location summons a sepia photograph, a useful attempt at giving the game a real-world anchor. The characters have been filmed rather than drawn, and they speak with distinctive voices rich in character and authenticity. The screen-bottom commands have been replaced by a pure point-and-click, context-sensitive interface.

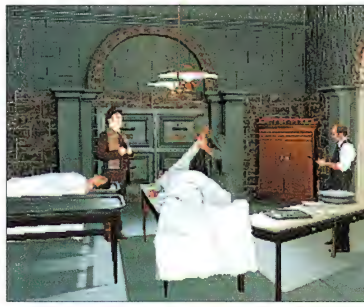
That includes the lab table where Holmes runs his experiments. In the original game, these were carried out automatically, but here, you do the work, clicking and dragging the chemicals and equipment. It's the closest I've ever come to having a chemistry set, and I hope this hands-on element (you can also play darts) is expanded in the next Holmes game. (There'd better be a next one.)

This game is also much harder than Lost Files. Perhaps that's why EA's included a clue book in the package. Watson will help you out here and there—he prevents Holmes from leaving a murder scene until he finds the gun—and his journal is again available as an encyclopedic reference on what's transpired.

Like the original game, Rose Tattoo is won through pure dogged thoroughness. The detective and his familiar sidekick, following the clues, move from sideview scene to sideview scene across a map of 1880s London (now rendered in majestic detail) that highlights the places to visit. You'll have to keep your eyes wide open. Holmes can't formulate questions unless he's fully informed, and he can't be fully informed unless he gives the game world the third degree.

PC GAMES A LIST

For all that, sometimes the game is a club foot. While Holmes' voice is ideal, the on-screen Holmes seems too young and slight a figure to play the great detective, and this prevented me from entirely connecting with him. The character animations are a mixed lot. Some are subtle, acted with charm and wit, and some are twitchy, repetitive, and irritating.



It wouldn't be a mystery without a visit to the morgue.

I'd like to see multiple paths, and the ability to make unrecoverable mistakes. And the same eye for detail that's so delightful when Holmes is conducting crime-scene investigations can be a bit tiresome when applied to the game at large. Rose Tatoo likes to throw up roadblocks at every opportunity.



Remember those chem classes?

However, as the game notes early on, progress always has a way of grinding something under its wheels, and we surely wind up ahead on the trade-offs here. No Rose by any other name could smell as sweet.

An American in an adventure wonderland

Circle of Blood

By Peter Olafson



The assassin went this way. But how did he get the sewer open? And how will you?



...Maybe with something from that toolbox in the background—if this moron doesn't shoot you first.

You say you want a Revolution? I'd have to agree. In Lure of the Temptress and Beneath a Steel Sky, England's Revolution Software combined intelligent themes, character depth, graphic beauty, and ease of use to splendid effect. The newest addition to its canon, Circle of Blood, is easily its finest moment.

Right from the start of this sumptuous animated adventure, you'll know you're onto something out of the ordinary. (What other computer game lets you play Breakout during the installation routine?) The intro voice that begins before the graphics do, the blink-and-you-missed-it subtleties of the intro, the garbage-can cat that startles both player and character—all evoke the movies in ways quiet and familiar.

As does the theme. You control George Stobbard, an American in Paris who's outside a café when an assassin's bomb goes off inside, killing the man who'd just entered. Shaken but stirred to action, this innocent bysitter begins a search for the clown—in the literal sense—who planted the device. (The police are worse than useless; Clouseau could run this department.) This quest takes you through 11 "acts" set in the City of Light, Ireland, Spain, and Syria to a grand finale in Scotland.

The interface is dead simple: I didn't have a manual with our pre-release version, and I didn't need one. The cursor becomes what it points at—a beckoning finger to move off or scroll the screen, a magnifying glass to take a closer look, a set of gears to operate some mechanism, a toothy mouth to chat. If Circle has a weakness, it's providing a little too much help.

You'll be chatting a lot. While you have a screen-top inventory—where would an adventure game be without an inventory?—the game is never a slave to it, and never descends into a treasure hunt. Rather, the adventure is defined by what information you can elicit by clicking on items you've collected and images of characters you've encountered. It doesn't feel like looking for your car keys at 8:59 a.m. It feels like a conversation.

And Circle looks like a million bucks. The artists have quietly incorporated a sense of dimension and perspective in their work that helps define the focus of your attention and how you play the game. You find yourself naturally clicking on things that are important. Parallax-scrolling foregrounds successfully provide a sense of George being within a place, rather than simply superimposed on one. The characters are so fluidly animated that I thought them to have been traced from life, with all sorts of purpose-specific movements, and they blend nicely with the Don Bluth–like cut-scene animations.

Indeed, there's so much art to the game's construction—perhaps more than there is to winning—that you'll be consumed by the process of discovery as much as the search for solutions. For instance, an absolutely amazing amount of dialogue is buried in here. You can question even incidental characters about every object in your inventory (sometimes repeatedly) and get surprisingly item-specific responses.

All of the dialogue is accompanied by splendid accents—the English lady who creates a diversion for you at the hotel is a pip—and much of it is laugh-out-loud funny.

"I'm innocent!" our hero protests to an idiot gendarme who's drawn his pistol prematurely. "I'm an American!"

"Can't make up your mind, huh?" returns the cop.

I nearly busted a gut.



The door across the street seems to be locked, but it's really just swollen. The flower lady can clear your path.



TIPS

- Give the road worker the newspaper you found in front of the café. He'll wander off and you can raid his toolbox.
- The tailor won't open up about his customer until you have the picture Nico snapped at the scene.
- The key you'll get at the hotel doesn't let you into the assassin's room, but it does open the one next door.

GAMEPLAY:	A
GETTING STARTED:	A
GRAPHICS:	A
SOUND CHECK:	A
OVERALL	A

Developer: Revolution Software
Publisher: Virgin Interactive Entertainment
800-874-4607
www.vie.com
Platform: Win 95/DOS CD
Requires: 486DX2/66 or faster, 8MB RAM (16 recommended for Win 95) Win 95 or DOS 5.0, double-speed CD-ROM drive, Super VGA, mouse, sound card
List Price: $49.95–$54.95

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Please pass the haggis

Clandestiny

By Barry Brenesal



Dig the bare-bones detail in these excellent graphics.



The Munsters? No, the MacPhiles.

Clandestiny's story mixes ancient Scottish clans, cursed castles, and poor real estate with a healthy dose of humor. Andrew MacPhiles and his girlfriend, Paula, return to claim MacPhiles' ancestral home. Of course, the Castle MacPhiles and its inhabitants, living and otherwise, have their own plans for this young American couple.



If you've played other Trilobyte games like 7th Guest and 11th Hour, you know pretty much what to expect from Clandestiny. This is a graphic adventure with a twist: no objects to manipulate but plenty of ingenious puzzles to solve, which ultimately reveal the path to the game's conclusion.

In any Trilobyte game, the hero isn't the guy or gal you play; instead, it's the object of your constant attention, the mansion (or, in this case, the castle) that you investigate. And Castle MacPhiles lives up to the same high-class, Super VGA architectural standards and quality furnishings of its predecessors. Attractive details abound, such as the late medieval Celtic revivalist font on the alphabet letters in the online Guidebook Glossary. Satisfying in a very different way is the manner in which the images and music turn sickly on the second floor, with dim yellow electric-bulb lighting and grotesque portraits whose human subjects vaguely resemble animals.

Clandestiny's animated sequences replace the occasional live action of earlier releases. Frankly, you'll want to skip them, but alas, some of the displayed information becomes important to your progress. These sequences are poorly written, overacted, and full of tacky animation. In fact, they uncannily reproduce the atmosphere of *Scooby-Doo*. That says it all.



That wouldn't be a chessboard puzzle, would it?

The puzzles themselves, though, are another story. It's amazing how much mileage Trilobyte gets out of traditional formulas that our great-grandparents would have enjoyed. Each of the game's logic puzzles and door riddles has a unique flavor and visual gloss all its own, drawing you into its world to the exclusion of all else.

The music is by turns moody, atmospheric, and wittily evocative. Clandestiny's humor is wild and silly, appearing from time to time in the voice-over narration and the tongue-in-cheek Guidebook itself. The very idea of a Scottish clan making its name and fortune through exemplary cowardice is something Gilbert and Sullivan might have turned into a topseller at the box office. (After all, the Scots are among the fiercest warriors history has ever known.)

But to add in details like a festival day devoted to chasing "the wild haggis" through woods and fields (haggis being minced sheep organs stuffed and boiled in the animal's stomach) only enhances the fun. And when you conclude a Clandestiny session and the elderly narrator cheerfully exclaims in broad Highland accent, "Y'all come back now, y'here?!" it's hard not to burst out with a loud guffaw.

It's safe to say that Trilobyte's worked its magic again in Clandestiny. This game is great puzzle-based fun and as superb a display of contemporary 3D graphics as you could ask for.

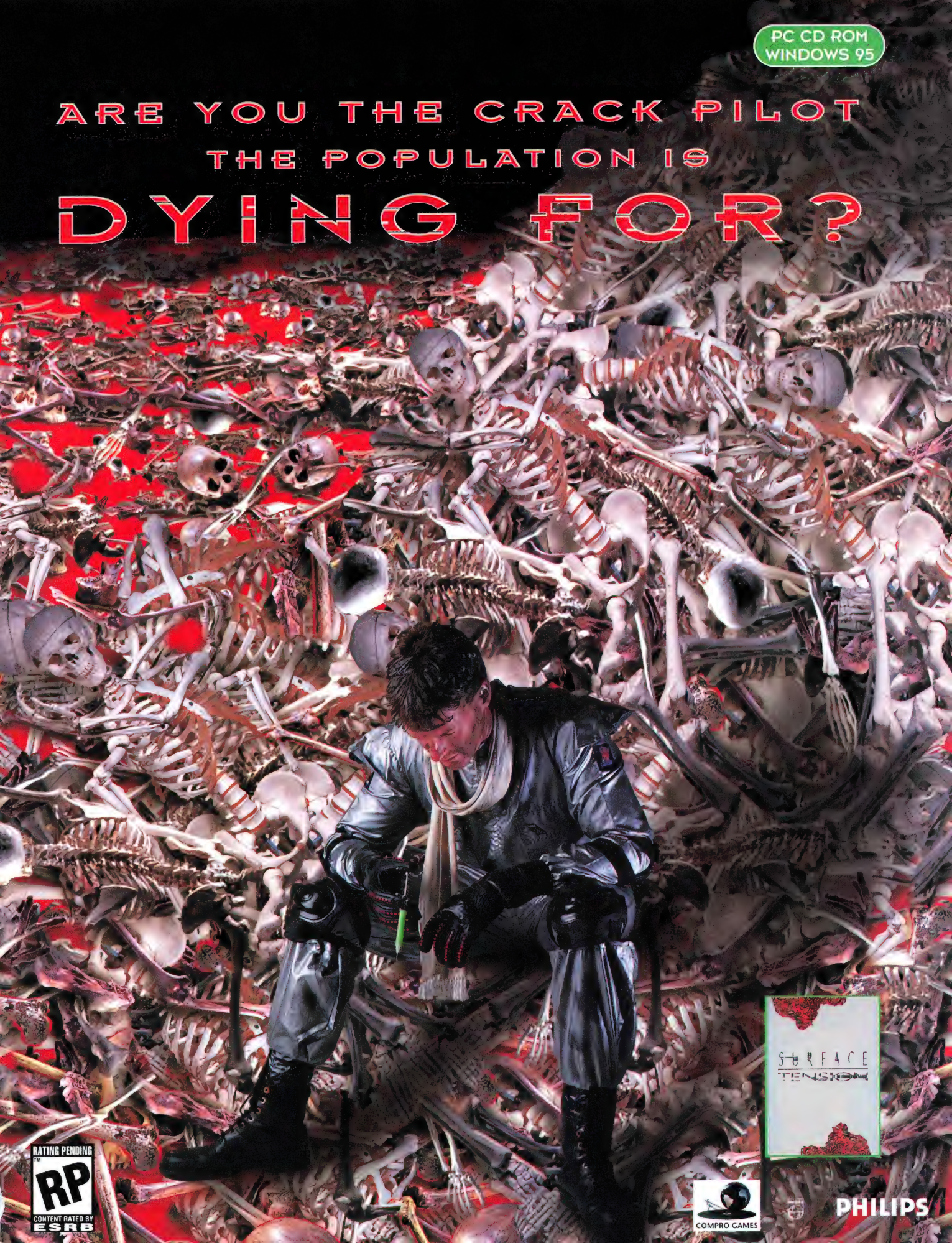


• You can bring up your Guidebook anywhere in the Castle, even in puzzles. Click on Photos to make a "flash" save of your game, and click on Tips to get a series of hints about the puzzle you're playing. • From the entryway at the beginning of the game, click twice forward and once left, then study the Castle MacPhiles TourGuide. Your first puzzle is in the Great Hall, featuring the stuffed bear that appears under the Guidebook's Maps folder on the first floor. • You can't leave the Chapel until you click the pulsing cranium over the alms box, near the entryway. • You can't get injured or killed, so don't worry about endless saves. And remember, if you ever get locked in a room, it means there's a puzzle there for you to solve. • Read up on the Scots myths in the TourGuide. Several of the serious ones relate to the mysterious goings-on in Castle MacPhiles.

GAMEPLAY:	A-
GETTING STARTED:	A
GRAPHICS:	A-
SOUND CHECK:	B+
OVERALL	A-

Publisher: Trilobyte
800-968-2983
www.tbyte.com
Platform: Win 95 CD
Requires: Pentium 60, 8MB RAM, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $55

Fans of 7th Guest and 11th Hour will love this topnotch puzzle-based graphics adventure.


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Toy Story's bizarre evil twin

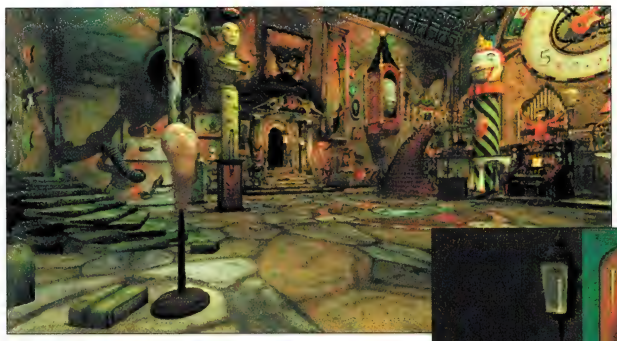
9

By Peter Olafson

What is entertaining is not always fun. That's the lesson I drew from 9, a seemingly enjoyable but vaguely uninspiring graphic adventure from Robert De Niro's software studio.

Having experienced the Mac version, I had already witnessed the game's bizarre, haunting style. Extended acquaintance with the Windows 95 version only reinforces that impression: This is one weird little game.

The premise is familiar. You've inherited a resort—more like a funhouse, actually—from an unknown relative (voiced by Christopher Reeve). It turns out to be a sort of evil twin of *Toy Story* populated by (among others) a snarling little pilot (James Belushi), manic, melodramatic twins (Steven Tyler and Joe Perry of Aerosmith), and a solemn fortuneteller (Cher).



There's loads to see in 9's main room.



Recognize the fortuneteller's voice? It's Cher.

GAMEPLAY:	B
GETTING STARTED:	B
GRAPHICS:	A
SOUND CHECK:	B
OVERALL	B

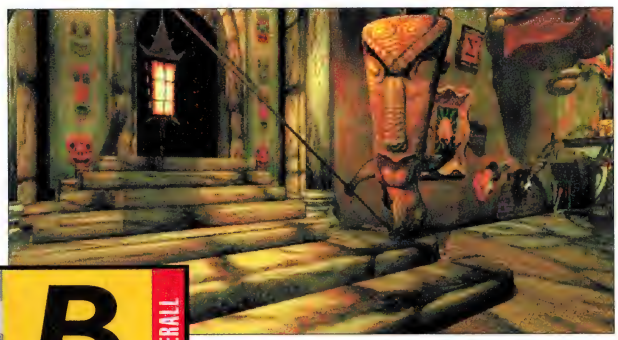
Developer: Tribeca Interactive
Publisher: GT Interactive
800-610-4847
www.gtinteractive.com
Platform: Win 95 CD
Requires: 486/66 (Pentium recommended), 16MB RAM, double-speed CD-ROM drive, sound card
List Price: $49.99

Stars and scary visuals keep you hooked, but eventually, you'll want to run for cover.

With help from parties unknown, the place is falling apart, and it's your job to keep it together. That means exploring this strange world with the mouse pointer and solving puzzles—some of them practical (how to fire a boiler or get a waterwheel turning) and some more arcane.

Visually, it's rather like finding yourself stuck in the front-piece of one of those old Alfred Hitchcock hardcovers—eyes peering out of walls, chairs that come alive, and so forth. You can thank art director Mark Ryden for this macabre circus. The imagery is all bound up in death, darkness, and the generally gross and squishy, but usually with a toy-box touch. (If Ryden can do something silly to defuse this Hotel Hell, he will.)

All the celebrities almost scared me off. Thankfully, 9 isn't simply a star turn.



Don't go there. (Not yet.) This escapee from Easter Island won't let you.

Belushi's Salty, who issues monologues while hovering about you in a little prop plane and yells if you move away, is one of the most memorable computer-game characters I've met in ages. (This is partly a product of the pilot's absurdly large, battered head and partly Belushi's note-perfect reading.) It's a delightful touch to have Cher, the world's favorite gypsy, dispensing hints and administering saved games. She's got the perfect voice for it.

The style of blurred zoom movement is also striking. The designers clearly wanted to avoid both the slideshow effect of static graphic adventures and the bland, monorail-like movement of QuickTime ones. I was also tickled by the sparseness of the documentation. You pretty much have to figure things out for yourself. (If you can't, you've got Cher, babe.)

Even as a virtual art gallery or push-button paradise, 9 will keep you occupied with plenty of incidental animation. Find a critter's skeleton and you just know it's got a tickle spot.

9 is definitely a departure, but I have to confess that getting yelled at by its residents, blasted by music and made dizzy by the zoom effect took its toll. Eventually, I just found the cacophony of sound and imagery overwhelming, and after a couple of hours, wanted nothing better than to escape to the drudgery and sanity of the workday world. It's banal, it's quiet, and after this, I'm developing a new appreciation for it.



Cher also administers your saved games.

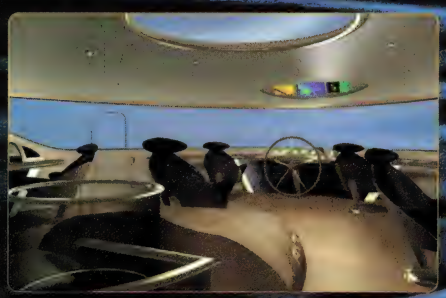
TIPS

- **You'll need to get that boiler in the main room up and running. The water's easy enough to supply, but lighting a fire under it may be another matter—it needs fuel. Just follow the pipes.**
- **The coin that summons Isadora's wisdom is located under the stairs.**
- **The first time you try to enter the tapestry room, you'll see a dogfight between Salty and another plane. Before you can gain entry into the room, you need to play a certain track on the Sounds of War album in the second-floor hallway. To see which track to play, find the record album to the right of Isadora in the lobby and turn it over to see which track has a star next to it. Play that track on the gramophone in the second-floor hallway to access the tapestry room.**

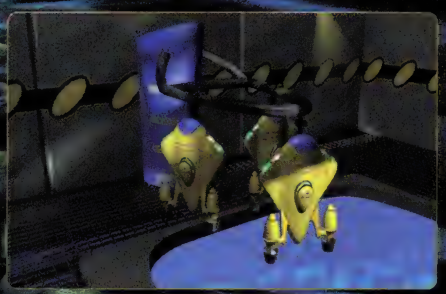
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Dig these ancient wrap artists

Mummy: Tomb of the Pharaoh

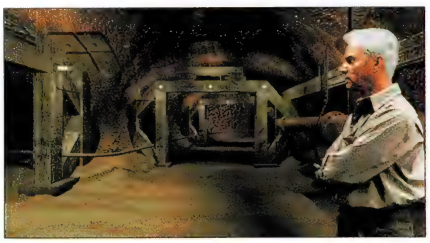
By Peter Olafson



Your old flame reports the discovery of the geologist's body in the mines.

Booting up Mummy: Tomb of the Pharaoh, I felt like the superstitious laborer in the movies who, wielding the shovel that breaks down the final barrier to a forbidden shrine, tells the archaeologist, "I gotta bad feeling about this, boss."

Unfortunately, my intuition was right on the mark. This Mummy comes unwrapped way too quickly. Interplay's follow-up to Frankenstein: Through the Eyes of the Monster, while pretty and entertaining, is simply too small in scope to keep you up very late.



Admiral Tolwyn at his new gig.

You've been sent in by the home office to clean up a mess at the company's phosphate and manganese mine in the Egyptian desert. An apparent artifact has turned up and the workers have stopped digging, fearing the cryptic box means a tomb is nearby. The mine boss (Malcolm McDowell) is positively livid, made more so by your arrival, and is happy to let you know it at every opportunity.

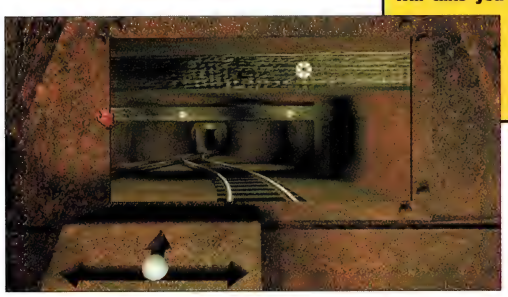
But the artifact is just the beginning. The workers not only aren't working, they aren't talking. (They're next to invisible.) You catch the head of the work force performing a strange ritual. You dream the strangest dream and it finds fulfillment in real life: The chief geologist (John Heart) winds up dead in the mines, a bloody ceremonial dagger at his side; and your old flame, the mine's Egyptologist (Marcia Pizzo, whom you may recall from Shockwave Assault) is attacked while trying to report the death.

Suffice it to say that there's intrigue buried beneath the surface, and it falls to you to explore the extensive (but initially locked-up) camp and the nearby six-level mine to get things sorted out. This means poking and prodding at other folks' belongings, collecting objects, and making repairs while getting into locked buildings and secret passages (and sometimes secret passages within secret passages).

On the whole, it's quite pleasant—for as long as it lasts. (I worked my way to the end-game in a few hours.) Mummy lacks the original approach of Frankenstein, but its mouse-based commands are accessible and its puzzles logical (if sparse). It's always visually striking—especially when you get to ride the mine cars. The improvisational quality of the performances is still generally dissatisfying—you don't really interact with anyone—but the video fidelity is significantly higher. In Frankenstein, Tim Curry looked almost like a hologram pasted onto the background. In Mummy, McDowell looks like part of the world around him, and he's his usual nasty, arch-villain self. Otherwise, the acting ranges from acceptably sinister to embarrassing.

I found the game's performance a bit flaky under Windows 95. (The Mac version is much more stable.) It occasionally put up requester boxes in midgame asking me if I wanted to Re-install or Run Mummy; turned the mouse pointer into a brush on a blacked-out screen; or simply locked up. Usually, I was able to recover from the problems without quitting or rebooting, but it didn't contribute much to the mood established by the superb music and the photorealistic artwork.

But it did make the game a little longer.



One of the most enjoyable parts of the game is running the mine cars. Click on the direction in which you want to go.

TIPS

- **Follow the keys. The geologist's key (visit his trailer after his death), Davenport's key (use his open office window), Lorrie's key (in her trailer after she's been attacked), and the ones in the mine-drilling apparatus will take you a good long way.**
- **The switch on the pulverizer breaks when you try to turn it off. Use the dagger from the murder scene to cut the nearby hydraulic line.**
- **The mine cars will take you from Level Four to Level Six. Crash right through the barricade you'll find en route.**

GAMEPLAY:	C+
GETTING STARTED:	B
GRAPHICS:	A-
SOUND CHECK:	B+
OVERALL	C

Publisher: Interplay
800-468-3775
www.interplay.com
Platform: Win 95/DOS CD
Requires: 486/33, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0 with Win 3.1 or Win 95, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse, sound card
List Price: $49.95

Nice-looking, fun, but much too short.

Huh. Huh huh, huh huh (heh heh), huh (heh heh) huh

Beavis and Butt-head Moron-a-thon

By Corey Cohen



Two dorks, one question. Can you handle it?

Dammit, it sucks; it SUCKS!!! One minute *Beavis and Butt-head* is airing six nights a week, with the occasional moron-a-thon to keep you sane. Next thing you know, there's just *Ren & Stimpy* and an upcoming movie. You finished Viacom's Virtual Stupidity months ago. What the hell is *this* crap?

Yup, it's definitely time for a new *Beavis and Butt-head* game, and Viacom's delivered not one, but two new titles. The first entries in the Cheap Clicks range of short, inexpensive games, they're crammed full of the sheer idiocy that Butt-heads love to imitate.

Little Thingies, a collection of seven arcade-like minigames, has our favorite losers doing just what they always do: pissing people off. Four of the games are carryovers from Virtual Stupidity: Air Guitar (make your own music with farts and grunts), Bug Justice (fry insects with a magnifying glass), Court Chaos (peg yuppie dudes with tennis balls), and Hock-A-Loogie (spit on McVicker's head).

The new games have different moves and settings, but the same freeware feel. In Wrecked'em Ball, you glide Beavis across the bottom of the screen, catching nachos and nudie mags while dodging sinks, cabinets, and other heavy objects. Change It puts you—where else?—in front of the tube, switching channels to get rid of all the sucky shows. Finally, there's Thank You, Drive Through, where, as the two brainless anti-heroes, you serve Daria, Buzzcut, and the rest of the crew from the counter at Burger World. Like the TV show, you have the megatalented Mike Judge supplying all the voices.

It sounds fun, and, yeah, it is—for a little while, at least. Virtual Stupidity managed to balance some truly engaging adventure-game puzzles with the occasional minigame, making these arcade segments a welcome change of pace. On their own, the simple thrills of burning ants and slinging burgers get old real fast. The low-res graphics don't help much, either. Beavis fans or Tetris types may like this one, but the rest of you will get sick of it in a hurry.



Grab the right snacks in Wrecked'em Ball, and you'll get a (Whoa!) turn as Cornholio.

Wiener Takes All, on the other hand, mixes solid graphics, outrageous questions, and the voice talent of you-know-who in a trivia game that's truly funny. In a *Jeopardy!*-like format, one to three players can choose questions from three categories: Hormonally Driven Teenaged Delinquents (i.e., episode questions), Chicks, Music and Other Cool Stuff, and a combination of the two. All the while, of course, you get the random comments of Beavis and Butt-head—"Boingggggg!!!" "Player 1 is kicking ass," and similar deep thoughts.

If you can stand watching the same intro every time you play (there's no way to bypass it), Wiener Takes All delivers the goods. With more than 400 comments and 750 questions, there's a reasonable amount of variety for your money. My recommendation: gather your friends, grab some beers, and take a seat. This is trivia the way it ought to be.



You dumbass. Can't get enough? Check out Viacom's Beavis and Butt-head in Calling All Dorks, an entertainment utility with desktop enhancements, add-ons that customize your Windows accessories, and other diversions. You'll also want to look for Beavis and Butt-head in Desktop Stuff (also from Viacom), an upcoming package containing "eight different activities and temporary distractions," including Shooting Gallery, Kick the Can, and Painting Dude.

Little Thingies

GAMEPLAY:	C+
GETTING STARTED:	A-
GRAPHICS:	C-
SOUND CHECK:	B
OVERALL	C

Uhh...yeah.

Wiener Takes All

GAMEPLAY:	B+
GETTING STARTED:	A-
GRAPHICS:	B+
SOUND CHECK:	A-
OVERALL	B+

Like, pretty cool.

Publisher: Viacom New Media
800-469-2539
www.viacomnewmedia.com
Platform: Win 95 CD
Requires: 486DX/66, 8MB RAM, Super VGA (Wiener Takes All), Win 95-compatible sound card and video card (WTA), VLB or PCI video card (Little Thingies), DirectSound-compatible sound card (LT), double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $19.99 each

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Doesn't anyone EXPLODE around here?

MegaRace 2

By Daniel Morris





Sharp 3D and eye-catching textures highlight the impressive tracks.

Sure, it's combat, but no one really gets hurt.

It's hard to escape the original MegaRace; it's everywhere, in every software bundle from here to the Pecos. Did its proliferation mean that a sequel was inevitable? If you're a gambling man, the odds were better than even.

Well, it's time to cash in, because Mindscape has pulled the tarp off MegaRace 2 and rolled it out just in time to join the other '97 models gearing up for their Christmas sprints. Like its predecessor, Cryo Entertainment's MegaRace 2 doesn't concern itself with the nitty-gritty of auto racing, leaving that to the guys over at Papyrus. The game is more reminiscent of Slipstream 5000 than NASCAR or IndyCar 2.



Host Lance Boyle can sling a bad joke faster than you can say "*Running Man.*"



TIPS

• Spend your initial money on oil slicks and minelayers. You'll find mischief much more effective when it's used to sustain a lead, not to seize one. • Don't worry too much about armor in the early races. Your starting shell will get you through, provided you don't take direct missile hits. • Learn to weave left and right on the straightaways to discourage passing attempts.

For starters, MegaRace 2 looks awesome—the 3D cars, tracks, and environments aren't just candy for the eyes, they're Godiva chocolates for the eyes. This race is no longer on rails, either. MegaRace 2 is true 3D action that runs fast and smooth, provided you've got a Pentium under your hood. The 3D is seamless in a way few true 3D games are, even in the face of such usual speed bumps as a chase-car moving camera and rotating spinouts. The textured tracks are sharp.

The car physics are also quite slick. They're not necessarily realistic; rather, they're hyper-realistic in a believable way. Each track contains numerous tight turns and forks that demand sliding and skidding to navigate successfully, and the physics of all this sliding and skidding are eye-popping. They're intuitive enough that you can begin anticipating them and incorporating them into your driving almost off the bat, yet they don't lose any of their power as you start to get used to the game.

Of course, assuming MegaRace 2 to be anything remotely like a "racing sim" would be, as Arnie might put it, a big mistake. This is arcade action in its most classic sense. You won't spend your pre-race time tweaking drag coefficients or experimenting with tire compounds. Instead, you'll be plunking down cash for grenade launchers and oil-slick layers, and bulking up on your armored shell.

The gist of the story is this: It's The Future (you know which future—monolithic corporations, barbaric game shows, enslaved masses: is there any other kind?) and you're a contestant on society's most dangerous game show, MegaRace 2. In a video intro, sleazy host Lance Boyle sets up the race conditions: win and you'll advance to riches, lose and it's a pit stop at Lobotomy Bay.

Okay so far.

Reasons to be less than overjoyed by MegaRace 2—well, your modem is a dead appendage. There is no multiplayer capability and the computer opponents get old fast. Multiplayer is not just the "It" thing of the moment; it's a necessity in a racing game, whether sim or arcade. You'll notice the lack of multiplayer support about five minutes after you first cross the starting line, when you start pining to hear your modem hum.

The balance between racing and combat also leaves MegaRace 2 in a bit of a schizoid situation—it seems like the combat is strictly an addendum. Cars don't seem to sustain any discernible damage from weapons hits. A simple damage bar records the state of your car's well-being, and when the bar is full (or empty? I can't remember which) you simply stop in your tracks with a note on the screen reading "You've crashed."

The problem is, you didn't crash. No one crashes. There are no fiery ends, no rolling disasters, no death throes. Hell, there's no crumpling metal. What kind of combat driving is this?

Bottom line: the game looks great, but I was bored with it pretty quick. If you're a hardcore driving nut who just has to own the true 3D experience, then you won't be disappointed. Everyone else—the caution flag is up.

GAMEPLAY:	C-
GETTING STARTED:	B
GRAPHICS:	B+
SOUND CHECK:	B-
OVERALL	C-

Developer: Cryo Entertainment
Publisher: Mindscape
800-234-3088
www.mindscape.com
Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486DX/66 or better (Pentium recommended), 8MB RAM (16 rec.), double-speed CD-ROM drive, sound card
Estimated Street Price: $49.99

A great-looking arcade racer that doesn't offer any depth of gameplay.

Screamer 2

By Daniel Morris

Screamer set the standard for arcade racing games on the PC with its 1995 debut. Virgin's follow-up is more of the same, gussied up a bit but featuring few new twists and turns.

Screamer 2 has everything that made its daddy a star. From the opening selections of your team and car, you're pumped to go out and lay down some rubber. Once you're off, it's instant tongue-between-teeth time as you wrestle for position with the bad guys. Same setup as before—you champion your team through an international crop of road courses.

The graphics are as intense as before, and Virgin's recommendation of a 2MB Super VGA graphics card is heartily seconded right here. A ton of detail is included in every passing object on the track. Buildings, fruit carts, tunnels, signs—it's all rendered in stylish Super VGA, adding greatly to the visual experience.

Occasionally, the backgrounds can even be distracting, as you speed along and catch sight of some awesome piece of scenery and stare at it—and then slam into a wall. One snipe: the bystanders are drearily flat. They can ruin the whole screen sometimes when you're whipping through a tight turn and your eye settles on the sleepy, superimposed spectators. They should either have been spruced up or deleted entirely.



Screamer 2 looks sharp from cockpit or chase view.

Multiplayer support is topnotch, as it was in the original. Drivers can go at it over a network or modem. Drivers can go at it over a 4-way network. But as in the original, the computer opponents are tough enough that they provide a huge challenge when trying to advance through the championship mode.

And as you might expect, it's a feast for you peripherals patriots who own every conceivable piece of driving hardware to be had. Of particular use will be a Thrustmaster T1 or T2 steering wheel. Once you've got one, the road is yours. It's impossible to play a game like Screamer 2 and not go absolutely, completely, balls-to-the-wall insane with a wheel in your hands. Adding pedals for gas and brake and a gear shift, you're going to wish you had a racing helmet and goggles on just to complete the effect. 'Course, by then you'll have spent as much money on hardware as you would on a real used car, but hey, how fast could you go in that thing, anyway?

It's really hard to say anything bad about Screamer 2, but then again, it's hard to muster up any overwhelmingly positive sentiments about it, either. All throughout it, there's a sense that something's missing; or, more to the point, that there's nothing here you didn't see in the original Screamer. We'd like to think sequels add to and improve upon their forebears, but you'll be hard-pressed to find any significant differences in gameplay or graphics.

Which is not to say that these qualities aren't first-rate among arcade driving games. They are. The art used to render the passing scenery, particularly in the urban stretches of the California track, is incredible. And the gameplay is as smooth and involving as before.

But it would be hard to differentiate between the two if you saw them running on monitors side by side. If you own the first installment already, I can't see you thinking your money was well-spent on this sequel. If you never got a look at the original, Screamer 2 has more tracks, more cars, more music, and the same thrilling racing, making it a must for fans of arcade racing.



I left my heart in San Francisco. My lunch, too.



The exquisite scenery and buildings may actually distract you.



• Turn your tires in mid-air to steer yourself straight on landing. • Don't get too cute trying to cut corners. It's easy to get snagged on a roadside barrier. • A gentle nudge is all that's needed to edge a bad guy to the outside of a turn, giving you room to accelerate and pass him.

GAMEPLAY:	B
GETTING STARTED:	A
GRAPHICS:	B
SOUND CHECK:	B-
OVERALL	B

Developer: Milestone
Publisher: Virgin Interactive Entertainment
800-874-4607
www.vie.com
Platform: DOS CD (runs under Win 95)
Requires: Pentium 60, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0, double-speed CD-ROM drive, Super VGA VLB or PCI video card
Estimated Street Price: $29.95

More of what made Screamer the cream of the action-racing crop—but not much more.

MULTI-PLAYER, REAL-TIME, WITHOUT A YOU'RE

RAVIDEL

HE'S PACKING

A HURLOON MINOTAUR,

GIANT STRENGTH,

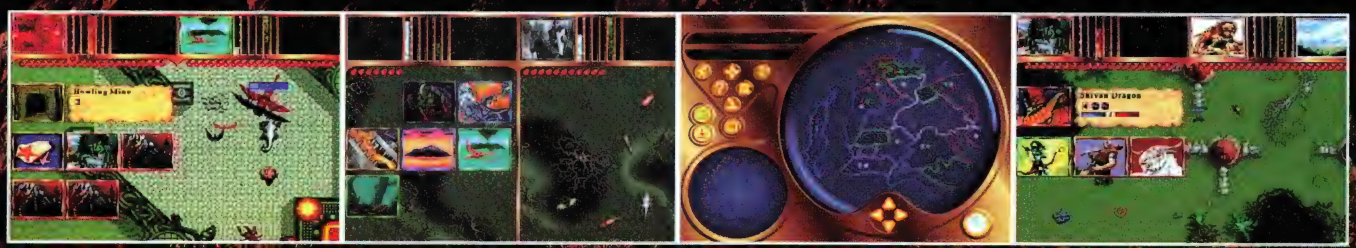
A FIREBALL,

THE WALL OF STONE,

REVERSE DAMAGE,

A HILL GIANT,

AND SHATTER.





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RATING PENDING RP CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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Forget honor: It's time to fight for cold, hard cash

MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries

By Steve Klett



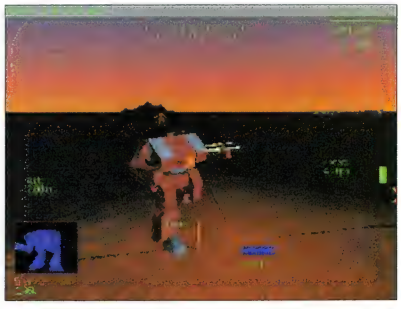
Mercs gives you 60 different Mechs to pilot—and fight.

The year is 3039. The Succession Wars rage in the BattleTech universe, as the five houses of the Successor States vie for ultimate power. War is a way of life for the Lyran Commonwealth, the Draconis Combine, the Free Worlds League, the Capellan Confederation—and everyone caught in the crossfire.

It is a good time to be a mercenary.

MechWarrior, it is time to forget about Clan honor. It is time to forget about fighting for glory. Jade Falcon, Wolf, and Ghost Bear? Who are they, and who cares? It is time to fight for what is most important: you, MechWarrior. Use your cunning, BattleMech piloting skills, and resources to their utmost, and soon you will be able to afford that island resort you've had your eye on for so long. Who knows—perhaps you'll even settle down, raise a family, and sell your BattleMech.

But first, MechWarrior, you must survive to see tomorrow. And that is no easy task. There are other mercs competing for the big-dollar contracts. Your fellow merc lance-mates could turn on you at any moment. Then there are the rogue pirates to worry about. And it takes a lot of C-bills to run a mercenary outfit, let alone a profitable one.



Aim for the arms and legs first.

Are you up to the challenge, MechWarrior?

Welcome to Mercenaries, the long-awaited follow-up to Activision's smash hit MechWarrior 2. Mercs is not a true sequel, but a prequel, taking place before the epic Clan battles of Mech 2 and Ghost Bear's Legacy.

What's that—you haven't played MechWarrior 2? What's wrong with you? Not to worry: no previous Mech experience is required to play Mercenaries.

For the uninitiated, MechWarrior 2—and now, Mercenaries—is a futuristic combat simulation in which you pilot massive hunks of metal known affectionately in the BattleTech universe as Mechs. These death machines are typically armed to the teeth, slow as molasses, and range in weight from 20 to more than 100 tons.

In MW2, you helped either the Jade Falcon Clan or Wolf Clan fight for control of the Inner Sphere. In Ghost Bear's Legacy you fought to retain Clan honor. Honor was tantamount to respect, and battles were fought according to specific rules of engagement. Fleeing the battlefield was the ultimate disgrace—any MechWarrior worth his (or her) salt would gladly choose death over dishonor. In Mercenaries, all that's changed. The gloves are off, the rulebook is out the window, and it's kill or be killed.

While the motives for war may be the most obvious change in this MechWarrior installment, plenty more has changed in the year since MW2 hit the shelves.

For one thing, you'll be piloting the weaker BattleMechs of the Inner Sphere this time around, fighting many of the bigger, badder, tougher Mechs you used so adroitly in service of the Wolf, Jade Falcon, and Ghost Bear Clans.

Also, MW2 veterans will notice the cosmetic upgrades immediately. Gone are the flat textures and sparse game environs—they've been replaced with texture-mapped terrain, Mechs, and buildings. Some impressive light-shading has also been added, allowing for spectacular sights in battle: the way the terrain lights up with energy-weapon fire; the missile trails; the manner in which light reflects off a Mech's armor. Enemy Mechs explode in pleasing arrays of smoldering shrapnel.

Better yet, once MW2 veterans dig a little beneath Mercenaries' much-welcome



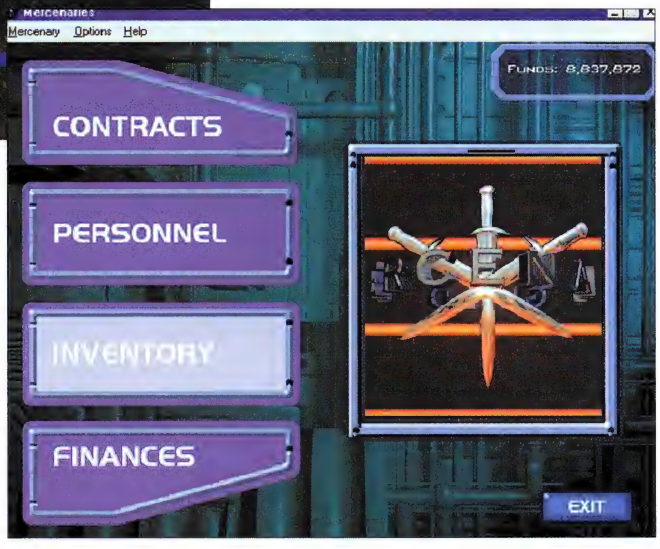
Dynamic light-sourcing livens up night missions.



Never a good position to be fighting in.

TIPS

• Check this month's Strategy & Tactics section, page 176 and 182, for Mercenaries tips and cheat codes.



Slick interfaces make managing a mercenary outfit easier.

facelift, they'll find the weapons and AI have received a significant overhaul as well.

MW2's greatest failing was the ease of completing it—though it wasn't easy to become Kahn, it was easy to finish the game. Enemy Mechs often wouldn't attack you until fired upon, wouldn't group their weapons, wouldn't lead their targets, and wouldn't use their best weapons in the right situations. It was possible to customize your Mech with a bevy of Long-Range Missiles (LRMs) and walk through many missions virtually unscathed.

Not anymore, MechWarrior.

The Mercenaries development team worked hard to make the game's weapons follow the specifications of FASA Corp.'s BattleTech universe much more closely. This means the LRMs are not nearly as effective as before, and a MechWarrior who relies on them too heavily will be roasting in his burned-out hulk in short order. Now energy weapons are the weapons of choice, resulting in longer battles (as they pack a smaller punch than missiles) but offering the bounty of unlimited ammunition.

And you'll need all the ammo you can get to defeat the computer-controlled enemies this time around. Now they lead targets, as well as dynamically group their weapons on the fly to deliver the most effective punch according to your proximity. For instance, they'll fire their long-range weapons while far away, switch to Short-Range Missiles at medium range, and use their close-range energy and projectile weapons for close encounters.

In addition, enemy Mech pilots now have personality, which means you're not always fighting the same battles over and over again. Pirate Mechs will fight dirty and gang up on you, ignoring all other targets. Clan Mech pilots will fight according to MW2's honorable rules of engagement—at least until they catch on to the fact that you're not playing by the same rules. House pilots will concentrate their attentions on a single target, and will try their hardest to save and retrieve their wounded from the battlefield.

In addition, Mercenaries has another card up its sleeve: Salvage. Not only will you be paid for successfully completing a contract, but you may also be rewarded with any salvage that your employer gains through your actions. The amount and type you get is random, but you'll need every scrap—be it an intact Mech or weapon—to keep your Mercenary unit in top fighting condition. Battle damage carries over to the next job, and if you don't have the funds or equipment to make repairs, well, you're screwed.

That random element applies to Merc's mission structure as well. Missions, or contracts, are randomly generated, so a job you pass up can be scoffed by other mercenaries at any time. You can choose to accept contracts for long, difficult campaigns that pay quite handsomely, or accept quick-hit, single-mission contracts for less cash and less risk. Just don't expect that big-money job to be waiting for you when you get back from a puff contract.

To "beat" Mercenaries you'll need to complete 30 or so missions, but the total number can vary according to your successes or failures. You can retreat from the battlefield, which may result in taking a series of losing-path missions to get back on track, and you never have to accept a campaign to win the game: it's possible to win by accepting only single-mission contracts.

Eight-player network play, head-to-head modem duels, and free Internet play (not counting your ISP charges, of course) via Activision's game server are icing on Mercenaries' cake.

Yes, MechWarrior, there's much replay value to be found here.

Any downsides about Mercs? Because it is built with the same game engine as MW2, it still has some of the same problems. Clipping remains a big thorn in the game's side. Enemy Mechs will often be able to shoot through what are supposed to be solid objects—hills, buildings, etc.—and actually hit you. And occasionally, a Mech you think is standing right in front of you is really on the other side of a building. This is an annoying flaw, but not a deal-breaker. Also, with all its bells and whistles turned on, Mercenaries will demand the most out of your PC's processing power.

But the AI enhancements alone make Mercenaries a must-own for MW2 veterans. The breadth of gameplay options and variety make it a must-try for Mech newbies.

So what are you waiting for, MechWarrior? Fame and fortune await.

GAMEPLAY:	A-
GETTING STARTED:	B
GRAPHICS:	B+
SOUND CHECK:	A
OVERALL	A-

Developer: Chaos Works
Publisher: Activision
800-477-3650
www.activision.com
Platform: Win 95/DOS CD
Requires: DOS: 486/66, 8MB RAM, DOS 6.22, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive; Win 95: Pentium 75, 16MB RAM
List Price: $49.95

Mercenaries offers a new challenge for MW2 vets and a must experience for fans of mechanized combat.







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Editor-in-Chief,
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Actual IBM screens shown



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MATURE M AGES 17+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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More flash than real thunder

F-22 Lightning II

By Christopher Tou



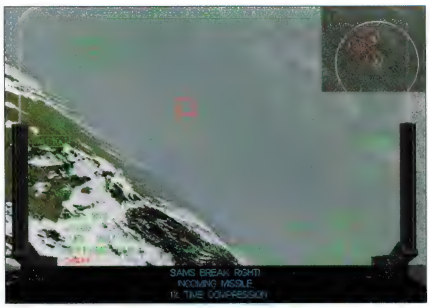
Hard-bank left over the Iraqi desert to avoid an incoming SAM.

Flying F-22s—now that's a job I could do. Callsign Wolverine: fighter pilot extraordinaire. A dream so near and yet so far...guess I'll just have to make do with Lightning II, the first of a crop of upcoming sims that will exclusively model the F-22.

With the promise of supersonic cruise without the need for afterburners, unmatched agility, and great stealth features, the F-22 is a mouth-watering prospect for all sim developers. NovaLogic is a veteran of this market through Comanche (now approaching version 3), although that title was often considered more of an arcade game than a sim. Lightning II may suffer the same fate.

First off, this is one of the most visually satisfying sims to date, rivaling even the graphics of Looking Glass' Flight Unlimited and Ocean's EF2000. Superb texture-mapping obscures the polygonal terrain, highlighting the green forests and snow-capped mountains. Even the fjords along the coast are recognizable from thousands of feet in the air.

Panning external views let you admire the detail of not only your own F-22, but also your wingman, your current target, and a missile view. The only drawback is that the view settings are not saved, forcing a repanning of the camera from the default viewing angle each time you use the external view. For those of you who have a favorite external view, this might be a real pain.



It's hard work maintaining a radar lock on a MIG-29 while avoiding incoming SAMs.

The instrumentation doesn't feature the usual heads-up display with myriad functions aligned on the bottom of the screen. Instead, you must leave the cockpit to access a full-screen view of various informational displays, such as the Stores Management Display. The result is a genuine potential for disaster, as the plane's still in real-time flight while you consult the displays.

Lightning II's flight model is as realistic as I imagined it in my dreams. Effective bleeding of speed during turns, stalls, blackouts, and redouts helps get the adrenaline pumping. The AI could use a little tweaking, though. For instance, AMRAAM missiles fired by the F-22 never seem to miss. Only the less effective AIM-9X Sidewinders reduced my 100% hit ratio! Granted, historically, six AMRAAM missiles have been fired in combat, with all six hitting their targets, but it's unlikely that that percentage could be kept up when they're used en masse.

Unfortunately, the F-22 comes tumbling groundward in a smoking mass of metal all too easily when hit by just one missile. Today's cutting-edge aircraft can often take a little more damage than that—at least I hope so, for the real-life pilots' sake.

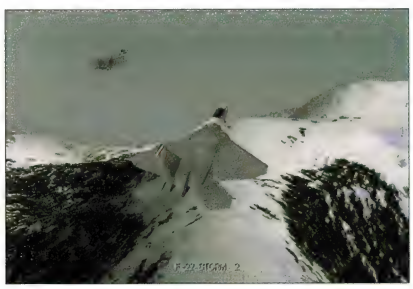
The 36 missions, 5 of which are of the training variety, are split into 4 campaigns covering mainly air superiority issues in Thailand, Siberia, Iraq, and the Ukraine; these locations show off four different terrain types. Linear advancement through the missions is bailed out by having unlimited chances at completing each one. This, and the inability to custom-arm the aircraft, contributes to the arcade feel.

F-22 also has a lot of potential for multiplayer fun, which may overcome most of its drawbacks for many PC pilots. The game supports head-to-head dogfights over modem and serial links, and network players can launch eight-way furballs.

On the whole, Lightning II's great graphics and realistic flight model set the benchmarks for the round of upcoming F-22 sims, which includes Jetfighter 3 and I-Magic's F-22. It should appeal to all but those hard-core sim fans who desire a more sophisticated and dynamic campaign model.

TIPS

• Learn to use your wingman! On ground missions, order your wingman to cover you using Ctrl-C, so he can take out the anti-aircraft guns while you attack the main target. During dogfights, use Ctrl-E to order your wingman to engage the enemy, thereby taking some of the heat off you. If you have a particularly sticky bandit on your six, use the covering command to have your wingman attack the bandit.



A squadron of F-22s climbs over a snow-capped mountain peak in Siberia.

GAMEPLAY:	B
GETTING STARTED:	B-
GRAPHICS:	A
SOUND CHECK:	B+
OVERALL	B

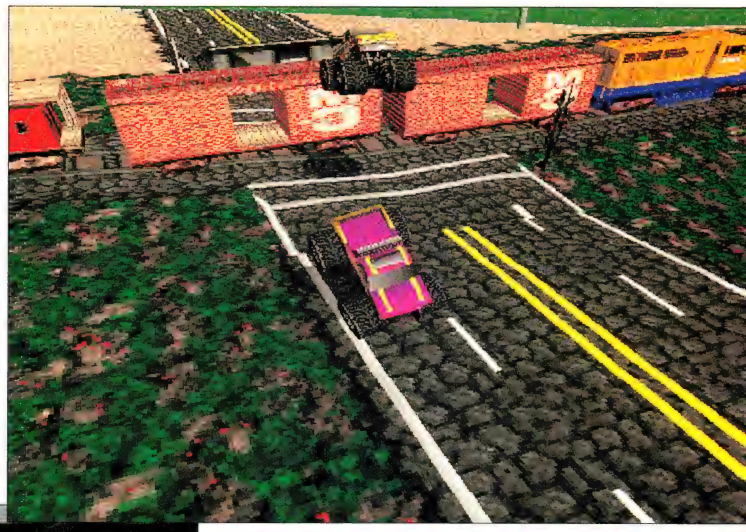
Developer: Chaos Works
Publisher: NovaLogic
800-858-1322
www.novalogic.com
Platform: DOS CD (Win 95-compatible)
Requires: 486DX4 (Pentium recommended), 8MB RAM, DOS 6.0, PCI or VLB Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $49.99

A great-looking, fun-to-fly sim that may lack the sophistication needed to win over hardcore PC pilots.

Big cars. Big tires. Major multiplayer fun.

Monster Truck Madness

By Rob Smith



Some camera angles are good for watching but not racing.

Why slip suavely into the cyberseat of a Testarossa when you can lumber into the driver's side of a four-wheeler with aluminum nudie mud flaps, huge wheels (gun rack optional), and a name like Carolina Crusher, Big Foot, or Grave Digger? This ain't Homer and Jethro's Wild World of Sports, pal, this is Microsoft's Monster Truck Madness.

You'll feel like climbing into a down vest and getting a tattoo when you see no less than 12 monster trucks awaiting your attention. The trucks can be raced in three different types of competition—rally, circuit, and drag racing. While there's no real difference in the ability of each truck, aside from the aesthetics of its paint job, you can tweak the acceleration-to-speed ratio and the gear settings. On the highest of the three difficulty levels, this helps give that edge in the downhome heat of competition.



First-person racing is the most intense.

Check out the drag racing: The lights flash. You hit the gas and drive in a straight line for a few seconds. OK, that's boring. After one knockout competition you'll probably forget that there are five stadiums to compete in. Never mind. Go for the circuit and rally racing. Five circuits can be raced with any number of laps. Rally courses are longer and have some crazy little features such as the Loch Ness monster observing events from a pond in the Highland Rally.

You can view each race from four different angles, including the standard first-person cockpit—probably the most fun but let down by a small, unintelligible speedometer and tachometer. These instruments are much easier to read in the third-person views. A Goodyear Blimp view is neat but pointless for racing. A map superimposed on the screen to show the bends of the track and the position of other trucks is a handy option. And when it's all over, even if you aren't rewarded with the winner's video, you can replay the highlights of the race from the view of any of the competing trucks.

So what's driving like? Well, this ain't no Formula 1 racer. Speeds are generally slow and those huge tires make the ride bouncy if you stray from the beaten track. Options such as autoshift and autobraking on corners help you come to grips with the strange feeling of controlling such large vehicles. You can make shortcuts over bumpy terrain as long as you make the checkpoints. An important aspect of shortcuts is the graphic pop-up: buildings, poles, and barriers can appear out of nowhere just as you make that inside move, so be warned.

A 3D graphics accelerator will enhance the Monster Truck experience, but if you don't have a 3D card, many of the graphics options can be turned off to improve speed. That'll be a must unless you have an extremely beefy Pentium PC with lots of RAM. The sound effects are realistic and the rock music soundtrack is suitably pumping.

Where Monster Truck Madness really comes into its own is in multiplayer mode. Up to eight trucks can compete over a LAN or Internet connection, such as Microsoft's Internet Gaming Zone (**www.zone.com**). Sure enough, the thrill of slamming your truck into Middle America's finest will bring out the hick in you.

Backed by a comprehensive online manual and video clips of major Monster Truck events, Microsoft has created a well-rounded, solid, not-quite-electrifying arcade racer. You'll need to provide the tobacco and Budweiser cap.

GAMEPLAY:	B-
GETTING STARTED:	B
UNACCELERATED GRAPHICS:	B-
ACCELERATED GRAPHICS	B
SOUND CHECK:	B-
OVERALL	B-

Publisher: Microsoft
800-426-9400
www.microsoft.com/games/
Platform: Win 95 CD
Requires: 486DX/2, 8MB RAM, double-speed CD-ROM drive, Super VGA
List Price: $44.95

Hardly revolutionary or awe-inspiring, but solid, exciting racing action nonetheless.

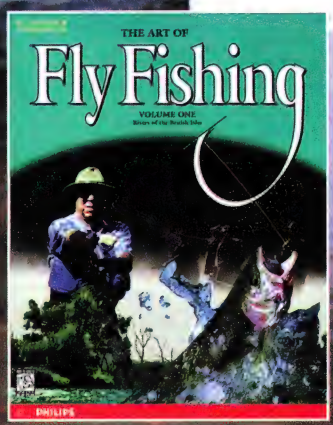
TIPS

- **Beware of suddenly appearing buildings when taking shortcuts.**
- **Opt for more acceleration and less speed to make cornering easier.**
- **At the first sign of trouble on the circuits, hit H to call the rescue helicopter/pterodactyl to save time.**
- **Use the radar if you get off the track to make your way to the right checkpoint.**
- **In multiplayer mode on the Highland Rally, there's a soccer field off the course where the trucks can bash a giant soccer ball around. A sumo wrestling variant is great fun—knock the other trucks off the side of the field; last one standing wins.**

CHEATS

- **During Crazy-Eight, type in TREX to drive the Tyrannosaur.**

Kicks Bass.





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PC-CD ROM

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KIDS TO ADULTS
K-A
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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A great facelift, but no brain transplant

NHL '97

By Daniel Morris





NHL '97 is the best-looking sports game ever—right down to the names and numbers on jerseys.

I've worn the stripes and orange armband; I used to make pretty good money as a hockey ref until the glamorous world of gaming journalism seduced me into hanging up the whistle. As a big fan of Electronic Arts' NHL Hockey series since its console debut, I was always able to get past the series' fundamental lapses in realism because the action was just so damn awesome. Even when your head was groaning "No way," your gut was chanting "Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!"



Bring the camera to ice level for a players'-eye view of the action.

It's always been clear to me (and to anyone who knows Brett Hull from Shawn Antoski) that EA has been appealing to what might most diplomatically be called the lowest common denominator in hockey fandom—the Sun Belt "ice newbie." For years, a game of NHL Hockey was basically a playable highlight reel from opening faceoff to final buzzer. And as addictive as the play has always been, those nattering nabobs of negativism like myself have always had cause for complaining that "if it's in the game," it wasn't necessarily in NHL Hockey.

Well, someone wiser than me once said that the more things change, the more they stay the same. NHL '97 boasts a beautiful 3D facelift, with wonderfully rendered polygonal players executing dazzling video-captured animations captured from defenseman Doug Bodger. There are some stellar touches here, from textured (and named) jerseys to the individually painted goalie helmets.

Graphicswise, this is by far the most satisfying of the series. The dynamic cameras, which move to follow the action, are interesting, if occasionally distracting.

So why does it seem like the same old NHL Hockey?

Beginning with NHL '96, EA embarked on a new philosophy of gameplay: if you can't make the game's defenses better, make the goalies downright godly. This mode of thinking keeps scores low and games competitive, but it doesn't address the fact that the artificial intelligence is only so-so, particularly when it comes to the defensive game. All-Star defensemen, guys like Chelios and Bourque, will routinely abandon their defensive assignments and allow bad guys to anchor themselves in the slot. Sloppy neutral-zone play allows breakaway after breakaway after breakaway—all well and good if you're only in it to build up your library of highlights, but dismaying to the armchair coaches of the world.

There's still no coaching system, no way to influence what's happening beyond taking control of your single skater. And while defenders do apply more pressure on the puck carrier than in previous entries, I still say to NHL '97 what I said to the original NHL Hockey—these guys are lucky they don't have Bowman or Keenan behind the bench, or they'd all be doing push-ups from here to the All-Star break.

OK, that was the head talking. Now the gut gets its turn.

Man, this game rocks! Blasting up ice with the puck on a string, undressing defensemen with dekes and feints, letting screaming slapshots fly and then jostling for a piece of the rebound. It's like Hitchcock said—drama is just real life with all the boring parts taken out. The man knew his stuff. NHL '97 is high drama.

So you get the point. If you're a fan of the series, then you need NHL '97. Its visual delivery is astounding. If you're one of the guys who hops on the games.sports newsgroups to complain about the series' history of goofiness, your grumbles are not going to go away with this entry.

For certified hockey lovers to whom NHL Hockey has always been a unique love affair, here's your annual Valentine, decorated even prettier than usual.

TIPS

- **Master the breakaway deke, leaning to one side to draw the goalie and then juking back to score to the opposite side. It's money in the bank.**
- **Forget the touch passing and one-timers in the offensive zone. Your quickest path to the back of the net is to shoot, shoot, and shoot some more.**
- **Since your defensemen tend to wander and spectate, your best bet on defensive-zone coverage is to select one D-man, stay with him, and guard the crease. That'll cut down on unchallenged close-in shots and rebounds.**
- **Learn to "headman" your passes. This simply means always passing up to open linemates ahead of you until you reach the attacking zone blue line, cutting down on your offsides calls.**

GAMEPLAY:	B
GETTING STARTED:	B-
GRAPHICS:	A-
SOUND CHECK:	B+
OVERALL	B

Publisher: Electronic Arts
800-245-4525
www.easports.com
Platform: Win 95/DOS CD
Requires: Pentium 75, 8MB RAM, Win 95 or DOS 5.0, Super VGA, mouse, sound card
List Price: $59.95

EA overhauls its graphics and delivers another solid hockey game—even if it doesn't improve significantly on its AI and simulation package.

Uh, are those da Bulls?

NBA Full Court Press

By Willem Knibbe



You can give Rodman a beard and tweak any of his stats, but only he can change his hair color.

It's time to lace 'em up and hit the hardwood—there's a new hoops game in town, and it's a worthy first effort, but not a slam-dunk success.

I'll admit that when I first started playing NBA Full Court Press, I thought it really stunk. Lousy graphics, weird control, annoying announcer.

But then I found the hi-res graphics options, and my basketball world changed. Finally the players became distinguishable from each other and had numbers, hair, and shadows. Then I started figuring out the finer points of controlling my players and team, although I was frequently annoyed when I carefully lined up behind the three-point line and watched as my player, in one of the automatic shoot moves, took a jump-step over the line before shooting.

Even Seattle Sonics announcer Kevin Calabro's contributions started growing on me. Sure, he still says weird stuff (a shot is never blocked, it's "expunged" or "rebuked"), but the play-by-play is linked well with the on-court action, and Calabro has an infectious enthusiasm.

But the uniforms bugged me. They need a lot of work. Every home team is in this sort of off-white jersey (check out the screens—without looking at the court, can you tell which teams these are?), and the road teams' uniforms often don't match their real NBA colors and lack team logos. If you're going for an authentic NBA sim, get authentic uniforms with team logos and numbers thicker than a pencil line.



Hersey Hawkins throws down a rim-rattling dunk.

Despite that oversight, this is a good hoops sim. The courts look realistic, and the player graphics are incredible. There are more than 250 player animations—everything from soaring alley-oop dunks to fade-away jumpers to swooping finger rolls to arm-pumping, taunting celebrations after a big jam. The players move like the pros.

And you get the chance to coach like a pro. Of course you can trade anyone for anyone, create a player, tweak anyone's ratings, take your team through an entire NBA season, and call plays on the fly. But it's tough to decide which plays to assign to the five play-calling keys—there are a whopping 100 in the game.

There's a nice Practice mode where you can run the plays (in a funny touch, each starter guards himself) and hone your skills. But in truth, you won't need much practice.

Why? This game is easy. Too easy. After playing it for just a few days, I took the Golden State Warriors (ranked 26th in the league) up against the Western Conference All-Stars at the hardest difficulty level. I won. What's the point of struggling through a whole season if you can already beat the best with the worst?

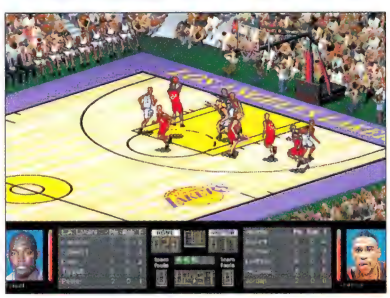
Fortunately, there are modem and LAN capabilities, and your practicing and strategizing will pay off most against your buddies. The interface for these options is well done, and the modem portion includes an address book.

There are also tons of extras, like an online, bare-bones manual, a glossary, and a bibliography of hoops books. Nice touches, but I'd rather have real-looking uniforms. NBA Full Court Press has the right idea—I like its animations, configurability, and 100 plays—but its flaws kept me from becoming fully immersed.

GAMEPLAY:	C
GETTING STARTED:	B+
GRAPHICS:	B
SOUND CHECK:	A
OVERALL	B-

Developer: Beam Software
Publisher: Microsoft
800-426-9400
www.microsoft.com
Platform: Win 95 CD
Requires: 486DX2/66 (Pentium recommended), 8MB RAM (16 MB rec.), Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse
List Price: $59.95

There's great sound, stats, and coaching options, but the controls should be more precise, the game more difficult, and the uniforms more accurate.



A nice little jumper in the lane.



TIPS

- **You can often hit the Steal button rather than the Block button to swipe the ball from a player just as he's starting to shoot.**
- **Beware the cross-court pass. It gets picked off more often than not.**
- **Pass quickly. You can do a "one-touch" pass by hitting the Pass button just before a player catches the ball. Just make sure you're using the D-pad to aim the pass.**
- **You should hit the Shoot button when you're pretty far away from the basket to make your power dunk or finesse layup move. With good players, you can hit Shoot when you're a couple of steps behind the free-throw line.**
- **It's basic basketball strategy, but it works well in Full Court Press: pump fake, then dribble around your airborne defender and dunk on 'em. A note of caution: your pump fakes can be blocked.**



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Mac OS

Designed for Microsoft Windows95

RATING PENDING RP CONTENT RATED BY ESRB



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Boom! Madden finally hits the PC

Madden NFL '97

By Willem Knibbe



The instant replay feature lets you track the ball or a player, and you can control the camera. Here the vaunted '85 Bears get ready to drop QB.

After 10 years of being the best football game in the 16-bit console arena, Madden's fast, helmet-crunching action has finally made it to the PC. Despite several flaws, it feels like football. The gameplay is addictive and the motion-captured graphics are great. Players run, tackle, juke, dive, jump, throw, and catch with incredible realism—the jerseys even stretch when they're reaching for the ball.

Solid, balanced computer AI makes it all work. The computer-controlled team doesn't make stupid decisions like going for it on 4th and 23, and it keeps you on your toes defensively by presenting interesting formations (often sending people in motion) and making smart play-calling decisions. You keep dropping into a Prevent defense? Fine—the computer will run it right up the middle for 8-yard gains until you adjust your gameplan. Do you blitz every play? No problem—the computer will throw to the back in the flat for 12-yard pickups.

The action's fast and furious and realistic. The players scream and yell and break bones. They spike or dance or taunt when they score. You have to coach and experiment—just when you think your opponent has an unstoppable play, you'll find the defensive solution.

If this were a new company, we'd be hailing its exciting gift to the PC sports world and lauding it for a great first effort. But it's EA Sports, and frankly, we expected a more polished product given the history of this game. (Madden was scheduled to make its PC and 32-bit console debut last year. EA decided that the quality just wasn't there, and rather than sully the Madden franchise with a poor offering, it kept the game in development for an extra year.)

The lack of polish is most noticable in joystick options, or rather, lack thereof. When you play Madden on the PlayStation, you get to choose which move your running back makes: hit one button for a spin, another for a speed burst, a third to dive, another to hurdle. Play it on the PC and you get two buttons, that's it: Button A dives, B either spins or speed bursts or stiff-arms or hurdles. You don't control which move you make; it's all dependent on your position in relation to the defenders. And on the PlayStation, you hit the appropriate button to pass to one of five receivers. On the PC, you hit B until the receiver you're looking for is highlighted, then hit A to pass.

GAMEPLAY:	B-
GETTING STARTED:	A
GRAPHICS:	A
SOUND CHECK:	B+
OVERALL	B-

Publisher: Electronic Arts
800-245-4525
www.easports.com
Platform: DOS/Win 95 CD
Requires: Pentium 60, 8MB RAM, Super VGA VESA-compatible video card with 512KB RAM, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse, sound card
List Price: $59.95

Addictive gameplay, realistic football strategies, and beautiful graphics make Madden '97 a Super Bowl contender, even with the controller and interface flaws.



Barry cuts to the outside.



Jerry Rice splits the defense and makes the catch.

EA says these limitations are because the game was scheduled for a '95 release, when there weren't digital joysticks and two buttons were the standard. But hey, it's '96, there are digital joysticks, and they had an extra year to work on it.

"Next year," the associate producer said.

There are several "next years" in Madden. Stadiums, for example. They all look the same. You can't tell Three Rivers from Soldier Field from Texas Stadium. And the game will be Windows 95–native "next year."

Like the control options, the interface would do well to take a cue from the consoles. It takes four menu choices just to switch which team you're controlling. The multiplayer interface and performance are also flawed. They should save a list of opponent's names and numbers, and when a game ends, there should be three choices: game stats, chat, and rematch. As it stands, you can check out the stats and chat, but you can't play again. Start a second game and everything moves in super slow-mo. EA admits the only way to rematch is to disconnect and redial your opponent.

Play calling, on the other hand, is very intuitive. There are 114 basic offensive plays, whose execution changes slightly depending on what formation (i.e., Normal, 2 TEs, 3 WRs) you choose. Get to know your passing plays well, because it's very, very difficult to run in this game. The 72 defensive plays offer enough variety that you'll be able to develop a cohesive gameplan, whether you're the "bend don't break" type or prefer to blitz like crazy.

Everything else you'd expect from a PC football game is right here: great instant replays that you can save, robust team and individual stat tracking, all the players from all the NFL teams (plus 68 All-Time and Super Bowl teams), the ability to trade (with no regard for the salary cap or the real world—swap Aikman for a bench-warming guard if you want), the ability to create a player and adjust anyone's ratings, plenty of ways to tweak your roster, and full- and custom-season modes.



Before there were telestrators, there were chalkboards. John Madden diagrams offensive and defensive playing in Madden University.

And, of course, there's John Madden. Not only does he do pre- and in-game commentary, but there's a whole "Madden University," where he gives a team-by-team scouting report and outlines football strategies as only he can. It's informative and entertaining even for those well-versed in the game. Pat Summerall does a good job keeping you up to date on down and distance during the game, and Leslie Visser reports on injuries.

EA's promise to provide regular roster and rating updates via its Web site should keep Madden '97 fresh. There will also be an area on the site where you can find modem competitors. That's good, because the modem play is great. In a nice touch, you have absolutely no idea what play your opponent is calling because you don't see his/her play-calling window at all.

If your system has the power and you have the desire, Madden NFL '97 delivers hard-hitting, engrossing action. If such big flaws as the limited joystick control ruin it for you, fall back on the old sports rallying cry: "Wait till next year."



Any time you're inside the 20 and hit B, you start high-stepping.

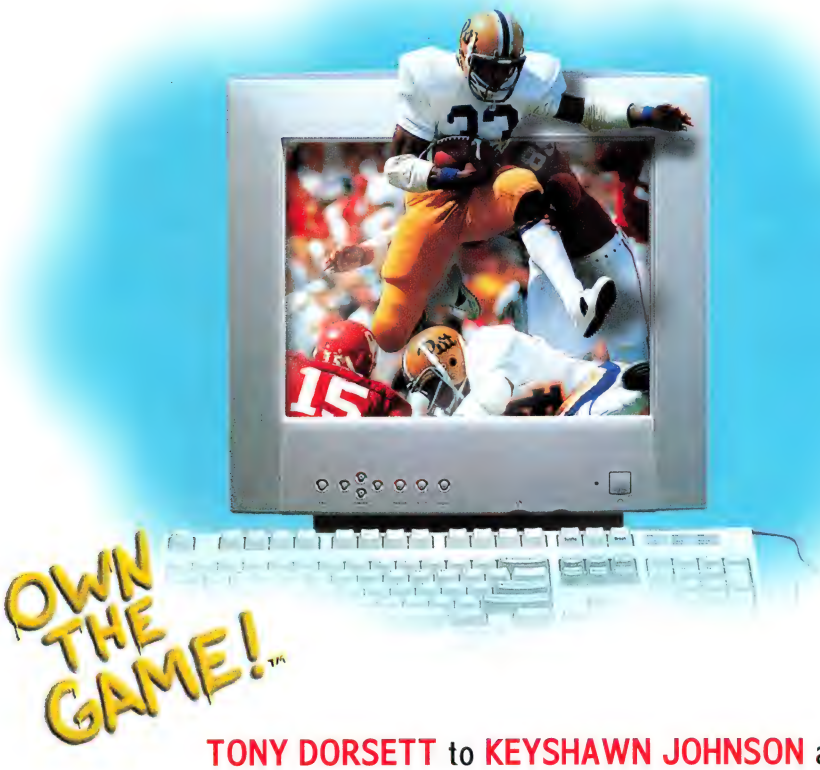
TIPS

• Pass, pass, pass! You must master the passing game to succeed in Madden. On the quick outside routes, hold A longer to throw bullet passes. On bombs, tap A to lob it downfield. Immediately take control of the receiver, jockey for position, and hit B just before the ball arrives to catch it. • Normally the receiver split left is the first one highlighted. You can change which receiver is the first highlighted before hiking the ball by simultaneously tapping B and a direction on the D-Pad. Tap B+Left for receiver one, B+Up for receiver two, or B+Right for receiver three. You'll hear a tone when you do it right. • Always kick off to the left side of the screen. Your special teams specialist always lines up on that side and is highlighted as soon as you kick the ball. Run him down there and make the big hit. • The "hb toss and pass" play (in the Pro formation) works really well against zone defenses: The defensive backs run toward the line of scrimmage as soon as the RB gets the ball and don't cover the receivers downfield. The play's a little slow to develop, though, so if your opponent has a good pass rush, you could get stuffed. • If you have a decent running back, choose Shotgun/Normal/post corner. Your No. 2 receiver (the running back) will often be wide open running down the middle of the field. The "flag" play (also in Shotgun) sends the back down the middle of the field as well. They're great plays when the defense is doubling your wideouts. • It's so difficult to run in this game that against human opponents, you can use nickel and dime defenses almost exclusively. • You can often get a quick sack with your right defensive end. Move him a little further outside before the ball's snapped. Once it's hiked, zip around the blocker, line yourself up with the quarterback, and hit A to do a long, QB-grabbing dive. • If someone's using the above tactic against you, run right at the defensive end. He'll be out of position, and you should be able to get 5 to 10 yards. • As soon as you call a defense, your players break the huddle and get into position. In two-player modem matches, this gives the offense an advantage: for instance, he might see you're in a 4-3 defense and change the running play to a bomb. To take away that advantage, highlight which play you want to call, but wait for the play clock to stop ticking down (signifying that the offense has selected) before choosing your play. You only have a couple of seconds, so watch the clock carefully and pick your play the moment you see the clock's stopped. Also, be sure to set your audibles, because if you're too slow in your choice, the computer picks a defense for you automatically.

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Battle beyond the stars

Star Control 3

PC GAMES A LIST

By Barry Brenesal

There is nothing—I repeat, nothing—in the universe like waking up one morning to discover that the stars are disappearing. I hate it when that happens. Never mind the implications for lovers everywhere. Think disaster on a galactic scale. Think allies destroyed in other star systems. Think self-preservation, for crying out loud.

In Accolade's Star Control 3, something or someone is gobbling up the universe bit by bit. It's up to your League of Sentient Races to discover the cause of the catastrophe and reverse its course. And just as if matters weren't bad enough—allies arguing, traitors working behind your Terran back—there's another league, the Hegemonic Crux, which believes *you're* the reason the galaxy's empty spaces are emptier nowadays.



This guy looks like he could really use a Certs.



Accolade decided to stick with the arcade action. Good call.

A graphic adventure? Arcade action? Turn-based strategy game? A breath mint? Well, three of the above. It's this unique, well-integrated combination of three genres that made Star Control 2 a hit several years back. That, and a wicked sense of satire that at times turned the whole thing into a paean to universal silliness. It also made my mouth feel 10 degrees cooler, but that was probably just me.

Star Control 3 offers the same three basic ingredients. The graphic adventure consists of a series of visual confrontations you have with representatives of each spacefaring race. As in most graphic adventures, you will be offered an opportunity to find objects certain species require, netting rewards that, in turn, benefit you elsewhere. You will also get more information than you can easily handle. There aren't many effective choices available in dialogue mode, but there's plenty of background information that repeats all the events that occurred for each race in Star Control 2.

Alas, the humor is hit-and-too-often-miss in Star Control 3. This isn't surprising, since the original writer/producer is no longer involved with the product. Newly discovered races are at their worst when trying to be funny. Beings from Star Control 2, like the Spathi and Vux, come across as exaggerated imitations of their previous selves. Some of this is due to the overstated voice acting assigned to each race.

Legend Entertainment (which is now a division of Accolade, and produced Star Control 3) is well-known for its heavy atmospherics, and it's in the serious moments that Star Control 3's alien interactions really shine. The writing, acting, and sound manipulation of the Mycon, for instance, are eerie as hell. It's alien in the truest sense of the word: a discussion with someone or something where few frames of reference exist. If you've ever listened to a religious fanatic on your doorstep, you'll know what I mean.

On the strategy side of things you have to build colonies, tailored in part to the advantages of your various League races. There are several factors to weigh, including which species will do best on

GAMEPLAY:	A-
GETTING STARTED:	B+
GRAPHICS:	B
SOUND CHECK:	C-
OVERALL	A-

Publisher: Accolade
800-245-7744
www.accolade.com
Platform: Win 95/DOS CD
Requires: 486/66, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $49.95

The latest version of this hybrid graphic adventure/strategy/arcade series delivers the goods, with lots of gameplay, configurability, and depth.



It's up to you to decide what each alien race produces.

what type of planet and what you want each to produce—refineries to process Ore Units, factories to produce facilities, star bases for ships, research facilities to uncover artifact secrets, etc. At a loss for information? Hit [F5] to bring up ICOM, a ship-based computer loaded to its electronic gills with information.

The action/arcade portion is the same as in the rest of the series, only larger; wisely so, as there was no need for change. Star Control 3's universe has 24 kinds of ships, each with its own features and drawbacks: The Orz Nemesis has rotating cannons and deploys space marines that inflict nasty damage when they cross space and infiltrate other ships; the Xchagger Exclave turns slowly but fires rapidly, and offers a bonus in paralysis missiles.

In Hyper Melee mode you can forego the storyline completely and just try out the various ships against your choice of computer-driven opponent(s). Here, as in the full game, you're allowed to run your own ships or turn that chore over to the computer, and you can set individual levels of battle competence for each side.

Hyper Melee mode also puts Star Control's networking options into play. You can beat the alien pants off another player using a null modem connection, a phone-line connection at 9600 bps or better, or an IPX-compliant network.

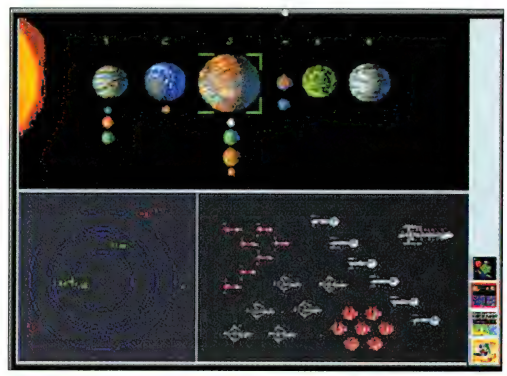
Overall, the game's graphics are very good. Legend used latex modeling for its animated aliens, which gives them an otherworldly quality no longer possible with Claymation (not for a generation raised on Gumby and the California Raisins, at least). The latex is at its least effective with the Syreen, a group intended as a satire on those gorgeous Amazon races from Grade B sci-fi flicks of the 1950s. Far from being beautiful humanoids, their lumpy rendering makes them look unintentionally grotesque.

While the Super VGA rendering is excellent, the color scheme is often drab. Consider the Colony Facilities screen—whatever world you place a colony on, be it Eden, glacier or inferno, this always looks like Detroit.

Although Star Control 3's scorecard is uneven, in one respect it easily beats its predecessor: game balance. In Star Control 2, the illusion of a freely explorable universe vanished suddenly after a gaming year, when you discovered that events were on a timer. If you didn't perform a series of complicated tasks very quickly, all sentient life (aside from one species) would be wiped out.

Not so in Star Control 3. The vast middle game allows you to trade off exploration and artifact acquisition for additional strength for the Crux forces—the longer you wait, the stronger you and your enemy get. It's nicely structured, and well worth all the time you wander around, gawking like intergalactic tourists at the natives.

Overall, Star Control 2 was a funnier, more colorful game, but Star Control 3 supplies a superior gaming engine, excellent online help (including a tracking system for hints), a sophisticated strategy-based colony system, fine Super VGA artwork, and far better game balance. Internal comparisons aside, Star Control 3 is a delightfully challenging game that's sure to please fans of the series and newcomers alike.



The orbital screen displays everything in a solar system.



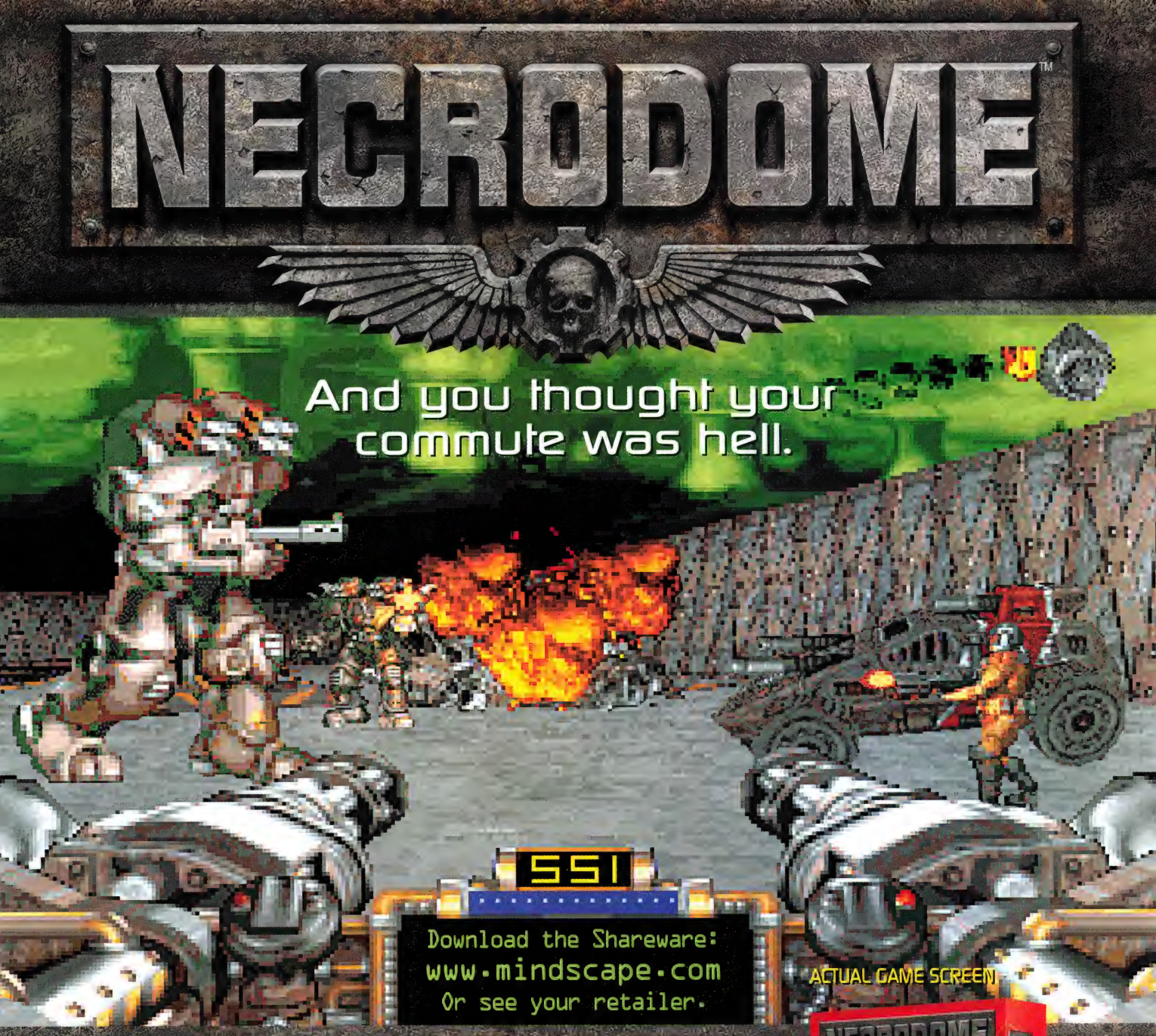
TIPS

• Play the action-oriented Hyper Melee mode a few times before you try out the full game. Shortly after you arrive on the scene you'll be attacked by a space vehicle, and some familiarity with your spaceship's controls can't hurt. • Why try to scare the Spathi into remaining with the League after they want to leave? They'll make more effective spies than allies. • The Pfkunk will always act in your best interests, but that doesn't mean the information provided by the featherbrains is perfect. • You win some, you lose some—and you win some back. If you lose allies to the Crux, consider winning over some members of the Crux's allies. • Take note of the adversarial relationships expressed by each race in the League. At certain times you'll need to make tough lose/lose choices about which species to eject. • If you distrust a League species after speaking with them, don't populate new colonies with this species. If they later choose to leave the League, their colonies will depart as well.



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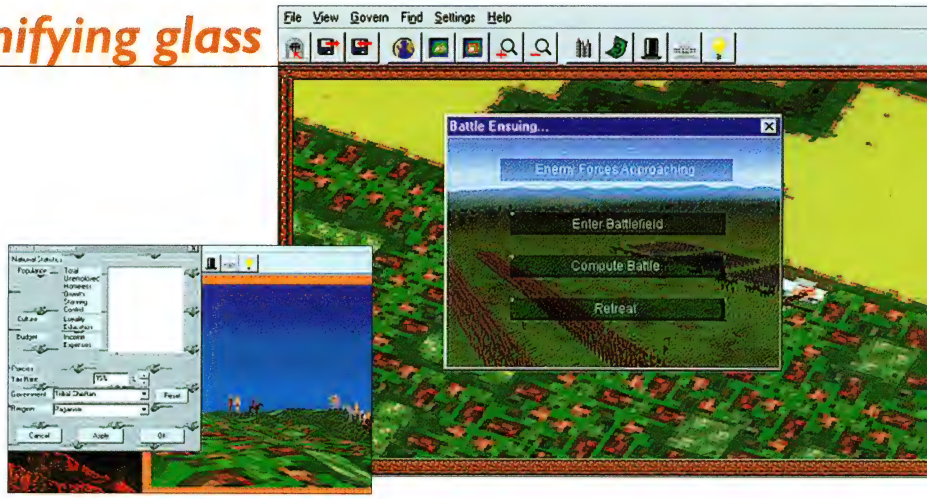
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Ruler with a magnifying glass

Destiny

By Barry Brenesal

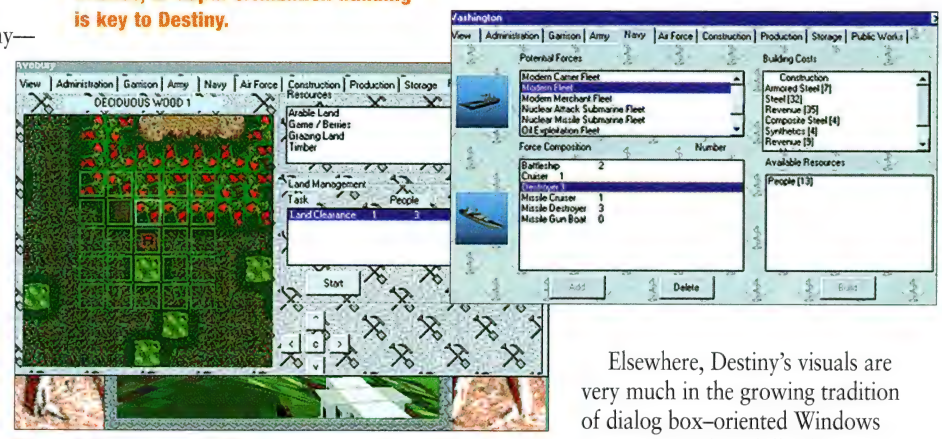


Intense, in-depth civilization building is key to Destiny.

"Wild" Bill Stealey was at the helm of MicroProse when that company produced the classic strategy game Civilization under a team headed by Sid Meier. Scroll forward through the centuries, children, and set down your beers. We've a tale to tell of Wild Bill starting up a new company, Interactive Magic, and releasing Destiny—a product designed to out-Civ Civilization.

In many ways, the two games are a lot alike. Both feature a timeline through which you grow a single tribe into a mighty society, discovering the world, developing your population, making important scientific and social breakthroughs, and building grand new structures. Both games let you trade with computer or player-driven opponents. Both let you create peace treaties and make war using weaponry that ranges from primitive spears to sophisticated jet fighters.

If you're a Civ fan who yearned for more depth, Destiny will make you drool. There's more of nearly everything in Destiny: over 200 troop types alone. It boasts a more elaborate combat system that adds range efficiency to attack, defense, and movement factors. You can make 235 types of breakthroughs in 5 areas: Science, Agriculture, Military, Culture, and Industry. Research resources can be spread on a percentage basis across any number of projects.



You call those graphics?

Play it in turn-based mode, or switch to real time. You can set the game for computer competition, network play (for up to eight players), or solo mode, growing a society without any interference from outsiders. Network-based Destiny offers much more customization than Civilization.

All this depth wants a good help system; but alas, Destiny falls short here. It has an "encyclopedia" and an online manual, along with a tiny tutorial. A real drawback is the omission of context-sensitive help or a genuine walkthrough.

Another failing is the graphics. Forget the game's default 3D country view. Nothing of any significance is shown, just some blockish representations of marshland, forests, plains, etc., with a polygon-fill generic image of your forces standing there. The topdown view (more familiar to strategy gamers, in any case) is more useful.

Elsewhere, Destiny's visuals are very much in the growing tradition of dialog box–oriented Windows games—just plain dull. There are no font or color variations, and the type size can be read easily through a standard telescope! But get used to it, pal, because you'll be spending a lot of your time in the City Dialog Box with its 10 tabbed folders: Administration, Production, Construction, Army, Navy, etc. This game is less visually attractive than Civilization II—no mean feat.

On the other hand, Destiny's AI is very good. It constantly examines a series of objectives and generally manages to achieve them without resorting to a lot of cheats. Sadly, there are no computerized personalities: no one to give each of the 12 computer-driven opponents a different approach to growth and management. Still, all AIs compare your government and religious type with the opposition's before making diplomatic, trade, and combat decisions, providing a degree of individualization.

Is Destiny a better Civilization? No. It's just different. All that extra depth in Destiny, combined with the need to click through a lot of difficult choices, makes it resemble another product entirely—Capitalism. If you're into heavy topdown management and want unprecedented control of your growing society and all aspects of its existence, don't neglect Destiny—you'll love it.

TIPS



• Research surveying early in the game so that you can employ the topdown map view. • Early research should be in the major areas of Agriculture, Science, and Military. • Be sure to build many primitive shelters and farms as quickly as you are allowed to so that the people are housed and well-fed. • Check the religious affiliation of any computer-driven tribe you encounter. If there's a match with your own, there's a better chance of forming an alliance and trade.

GAMEPLAY:	B
GETTING STARTED:	D
GRAPHICS:	C-
SOUND CHECK:	B-
OVERALL	B

Publisher: Interactive Magic
800-283-3542
www.imagic.com
Platform: Win 95 CD
Requires: 486/66, 8MB RAM, mouse
List Price: $49.95

A very dense, management-intensive strategy game about building a society and conquering a world.

Wanna mutate?

Gene Wars

By Rob Smith



Construct landing pads to bring new forms of explosive action to the world.

Every new creature or building you encounter is detailed in the useful help system.

In the days of Populous, Theme Park, and Magic Carpet, every Bullfrog release was a greatly anticipated gaming event. Then came Hi-Octane, and for the first time the gaming public saw the halo tarnished. Sadly, it's slipped a bit more with Gene Wars.

Gene Wars is a strategy combat game in the mold of C&C. But a definite and visible attempt has been made to create something slightly quirky, kooky, and humorous.

The storyline throws you a thousand years into the future to tell a tale about The Ethereals, a bunch of vastly powerful, pacifistic, environmentally friendly extraterrestrials. In plodding through the galaxy, they've come across 24 planets that have been torn asunder by the aggressive nature of four dominant entities: Earthlings, lizard-like Saurians, Bohemians, and Schnozzoids.



Build vats to store the GOOP created by recycled dead plants and animals.

TIPS

- **Build the gene pod as fast as possible and get those mules out to the special areas checked by The Ethereals.**
- **In the first specialist selection, two engineers and one of each of the others should see you through.**
- **Get the geneticists off to study any new creatures immediately, so your opponents don't nab all the info first.**
- **Sucking up to The Ethereals is good. Get a monolith and boost the level of your specialists to enable faster and more effective operation.**

In typically omnipotent fashion, The Ethereals have imprisoned all these races' specialists—the guys at the heart of these damaging wars. After a dodgy trial of O.J. proportions, the Ethereals decide to release everyone sans destructive powers.

Of course, the leopard can't change its spots, so the Earthlings have to cunningly use the eco-friendly power supplies and genetic engineering equipment to their own ends, which are, of course, to get rid of the other guy. Only in the multiplayer option do you get the opportunity to control the other races.

Four types of specialists come gradually into play through the early missions, presented in cartoon style complete with zany sounds. Engineers, geneticists, biologists, and rangers manipulate the three types of flora and five species of fauna in each environment.

The original slant of Gene Wars comes from manipulation of gene pods, used to create the mules, crabs, frogs, birds and dinos. With a little research from the geneticist, the right diet courtesy of the botanist, and the correct care from the ranger, these creatures can flourish—and then mate. More plants and building types will be unearthed as you progress through the planets, which at least adds some variation to the limited initial mix.

Combining the right aggressive traits with skills such as flying can sow the seeds of an army of mutant hybrids. But pleasing The Ethereals is the key, so they may grant benefits in the form of *2001*-esque black monoliths. Get on the wrong side, however, and they could destroy your power supply and specialists as a gag. So much for the pacifism.

Decent AI is vital to a strategy game, and Gene Wars has done a pretty good job of making the beasts act for themselves. However, there are still some infuriating instances of wandering mules trekking around half the world for no apparent reason.

On the positive side, Gene Wars' worlds are round, making movement to all areas of the map quick and simple. Comedy elements come from the sound effects, which are quirky and use some amusing lines and exclamations from famous films such as *Frankenstein*.

But that's it. In single-player mode, Gene Wars is certainly challenging, balancing resource management in the acquisition of GOOP (a funky carbon-based building tool acting as the currency) with the need to create mules to do the donkey work (groan!) and the need to maintain a decent defense against the criminal invasion of your eco-friendly environment. A four-player network option will bring the differences of the four species into play in some fast-paced action, but the overall battle is too fraught with niggling pettiness to ensure an enthralling contest.

GAMEPLAY:	B
GETTING STARTED:	B-
GRAPHICS:	B-
SOUND CHECK:	B
OVERALL	B-

Developer: Bullfrog
Publisher: Electronic Arts
800-245-4525
www.bullfrog.co.uk
Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486DX2/66, 8MB RAM, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse, sound card
List Price: $65

Entertaining to a degree, but it could have been so much more.

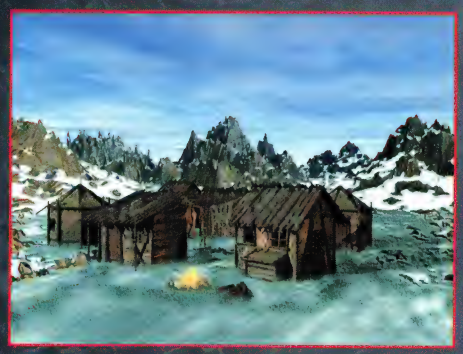
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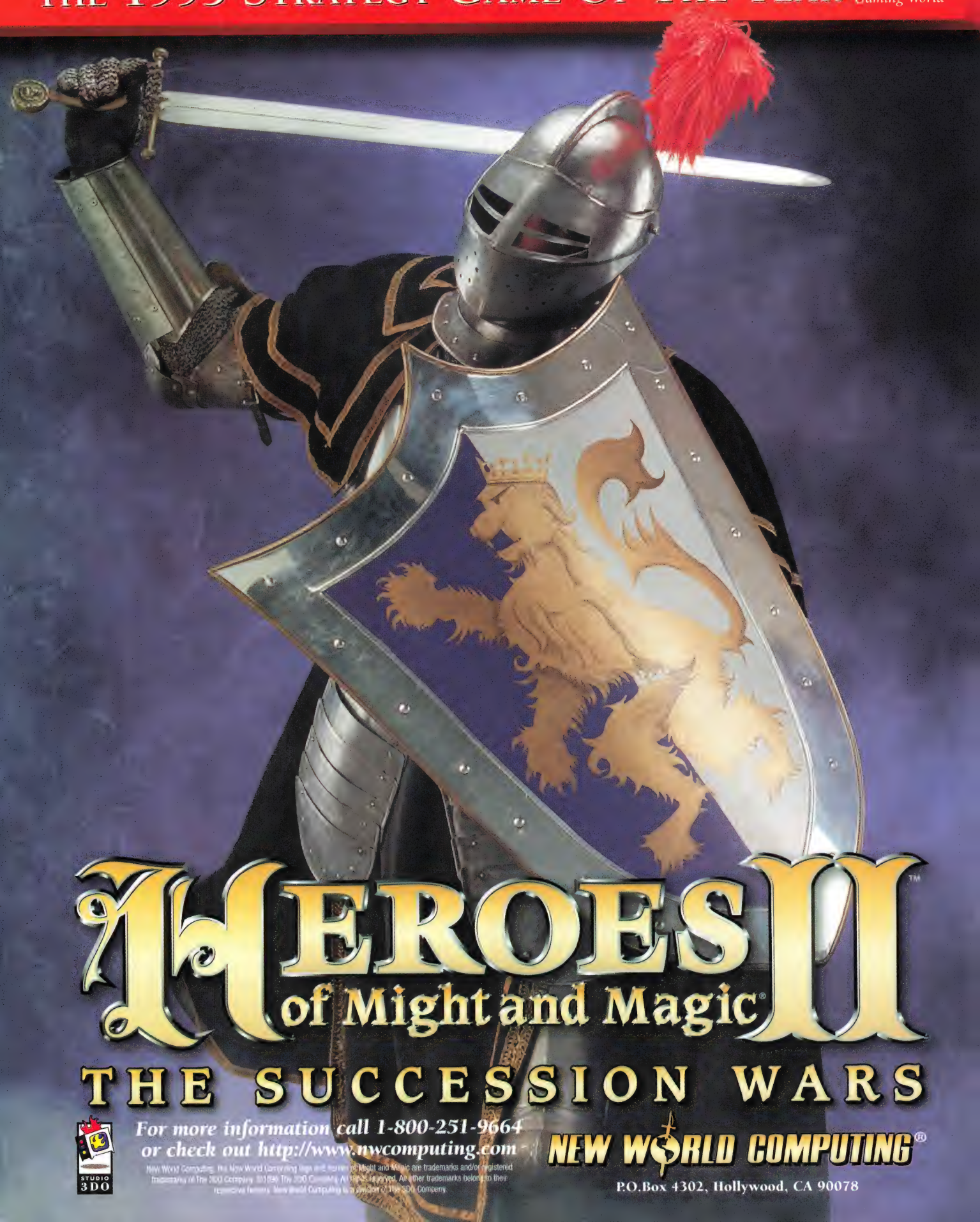




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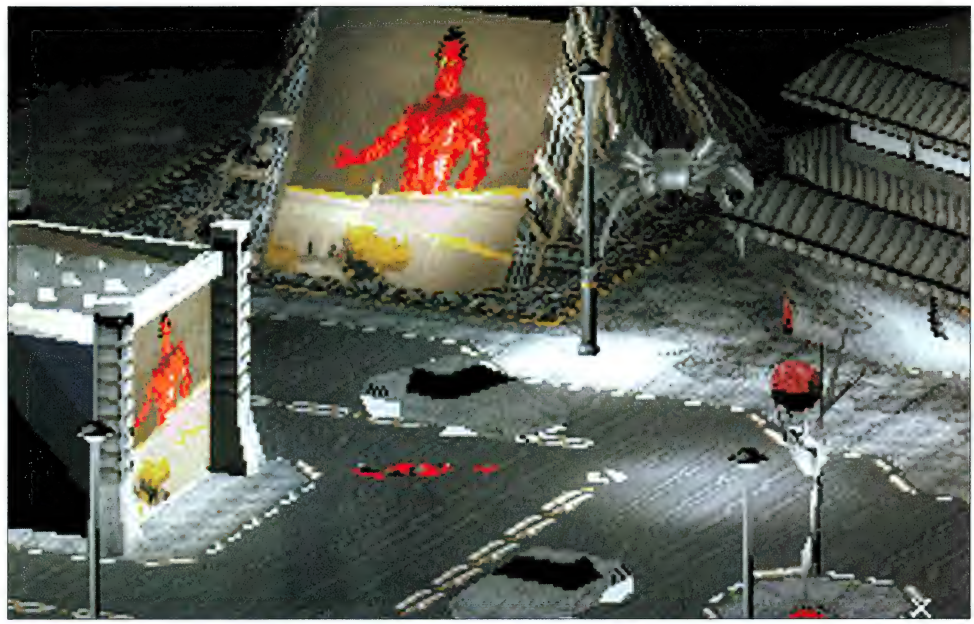
P.O.Box 4302, Hollywood, CA 90078

Bullfrog improves a classic

Syndicate Wars

PLAY the Demo on the disc

By Rob Smith



Grab a hovercar to go on a quick tour of these detailed futuristic cities.

International corruption, global treachery, corporate crime, strategic scheming, generally running around and raising hell—yes, the original Syndicate set a new standard for strategy games. By combining real-time urgency, high-tech weaponry, and terrific graphics, Bullfrog created a classic. Now, with Syndicate Wars, it's produced a sequel that, like the original, is destined to consume far more gaming time than any of us can possibly afford.

PC GAMES A LIST

Syndicate Wars advances the original story, which witnessed EuroCorp's rise to global dominance. EuroCorp is, of course, a huge international syndicate able to carry out effective operations through the use of hot technology. The setting is Utopia, as the world is now known. Thanks to surgically implanted CHIPs that keep the population blissfully sedated and unaware of being controlled, EuroCorp's 50 years of dominance appears to be totally secure. There's not even a hint of a civil rights movement.

But strange things are happening. First, a new organization called the Church of the New Epoch has sprung up, sporting some very funky technology of its own. Disciples of the Church, dubbed Zealots, are a significant threat and the main focus of EuroCorp's security services. In addition, it seems that some citizens have managed to overcome the pacifying effect of the CHIPs and band together in small groups, carrying out random acts of terrorism. These "Unguided" and the Zealots need to be eliminated.

You can choose to ally with either EuroCorp or, using a similar technology, the Church, in which case you'll be able to purchase such items as razor wire and an Indoctrinator to cull followers. Whatever side you choose, the missions are essentially the same, albeit played from the opposite viewpoint. Still, it's a fascinating insight into the unfolding story to see the other side of the argument.



Zealots do a guard job.

The Remote Tactical Control device (and later, an updated version) enables a EuroCorp Executive to respond quickly to events throughout the world and control his team of cybernetically enhanced agents.

Your package of equipment includes eight agents (you send four on any one mission), a cryo chamber to store agents not selected for service, a research facility, an airship for transporting the agents, four Uzis, and 50,000 credits. With this little lot of goodies, you're expected to carry out every last detail of the missions EuroCorp sets for you. Failure means resignation, and due to your exceptional security level, resignation means auto-euthanasia. So don't screw up: The stakes are too high.

Once you log into the Operating Suite, it's time to start finding your way around this new kit and tackling some missions. With only four Uzis, you'll need to purchase some other gear—heavier guns, gas grenades, and medikits are a few of the options on the shelf. The Persuadatron is a particularly vital piece of equipment—it stimulates the CHIP implants in citizens and turns them into sheep who just follow you around.

Moving around the city is a piece of cake—point to a place and click. Now the technicalities begin. Your four agents can be grouped together, moved individually, or grouped in any combination of teams. Many missions will require careful struct-uring and fast movements around the map

to co-ordinate your plans effectively. If walking is a chore, grab an Armored Personnel Carrier. A number of vehicles float around waiting to be used. Just make sure that when you run into trouble you get out quick, because if a car goes up in smoke, your guys go with it.

With only four agents, it's not surprising that you're supposed to do most of the thinking for them. A line has been included in the story to explain why your agents may stand around doing nothing while getting shot at if you haven't told them what to do. However, if you want them to act a little more independently, you can set their psychotropic influence level. Two types of drug give the agents self-awareness, but this is a limited effect—you can't get them to complete missions for you.

Naturally, all this action looks far better than it did in the original Syndicate. In 640-by-480 resolution, with all the lighting, texturing, and deep-radar effects (which turn buildings translucent), the cities look fantastic.



A shootout with white-cloaked Zealots could be deadly.

Rotating around 360 degrees to view every angle of the buildings is fun in itself, although with Unguided citizens to purge and Zealots to obliterate, there isn't much time for sight-seeing.

The animated characters are very simply done, with just enough details like blood spurts in firefights to help maintain the sense of action. The choice of trench-coat-style agents is another neat touch.

Mostly, though, it's the evolving, gripping storyline, which gradually unfolds in dramatic style, that really keeps your attention. With each new and harder missions, new information is uncovered. Whether it's a piece of equipment taken from a dead body to pass on to R&D or further infiltrations by the Church, there's always something happening. While mission-based strategy games tend to be very linear, Syndicate Wars does offer a couple of variations, such as different locations in which to achieve the same end results. There's just enough variety to bring you back for more—and more.

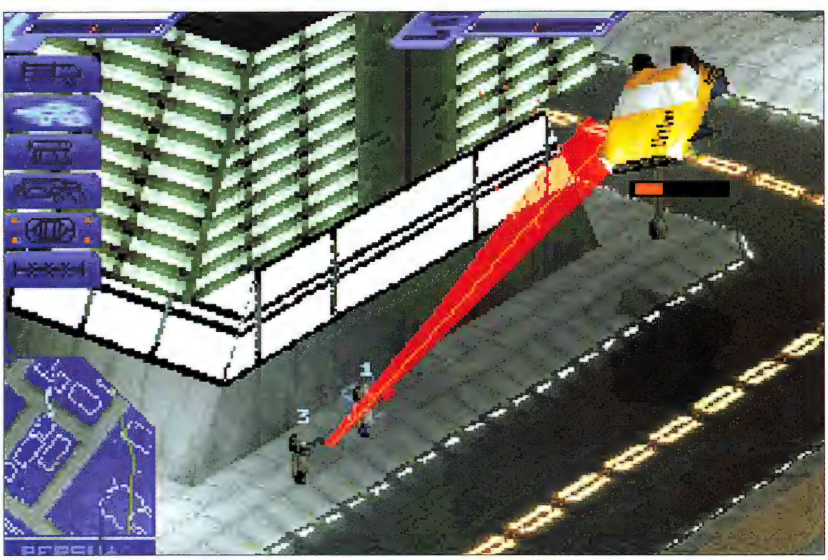
Fifteen multiplayer missions for up to eight players over an IPX network or modem adds another huge dimension. Whether you're working with EuroCorp or the Church, there are objectives aside from simply blowing the other guys away—though that's a whole lotta fun, too.

The original Syndicate's great concept is enhanced by the latest technology in this sequel. The depth of gameplay and balancing budgets, a team, equipment and R&D while maintaining the good favor of the Syndicate (or the Church leaders) is a challenging job. The presentation is professional, the atmosphere subtle, the gameplay intense, the graphics and sound effects awesome. Syndicate Wars is not only going to please veterans, it's going to earn a whole bunch of new fans as well.



TIPS

• Always ensure your agents are armed (their guns highlighted) before moving into the city. • Try to pick up dropped weapons whenever possible. Buy a Persuadatron early on and use it to get hangers-on. • You'll need to use a vehicle to get across to the technicians. • Beware of Unguided citizens with bombs—they're bad for your health. • Use the radar scanner in the bottom-left corner to see where your next objective is located. If one team member is armed with the Persuadatron, you can pick up people on the way without really trying.



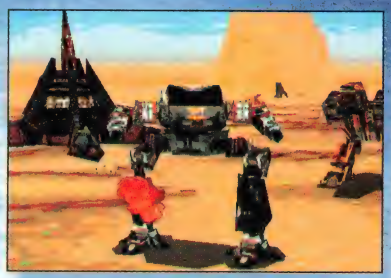
Funky weapons effects make shooting stuff fun, while the scanner in the corner reminds you of mission objectives.

GAMEPLAY:	A	A- OVERALL
GETTING STARTED:	B	
GRAPHICS:	A-	
SOUND CHECK:	B+	

Developer: Bullfrog
Publisher: Electronic Arts
800-245-4525
www.ea.com
Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486DX4/100 (Pentium rec.), 8MB RAM (16 MB rec.) VCB or PCI graphics card, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: $60

Intense, involving, and gripping—the hallmarks of a great sequel.

BLINK AND YOU'RE SCRAP METAL.



Eject from your HAWC, steal another. Bot-jacking is relatively legal here.



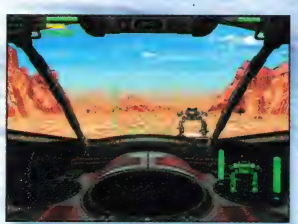
Wage war in everything from icy tundra to blistering desert. We suggest wearing layers.



Storm the enemy guard towers; try to avoid being turned into a red sinewy pile.



Destroy the enemy's HAWC delivery system and cut down on the number of missiles headed your way.



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Bring on the dogs of war!

Jagged Alliance: Deadly Games

By Peter Olafson

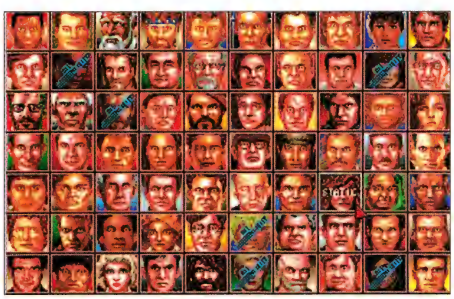


Buildings can hide enemies and goodies.

They have names and ranks. They have skills and inventories. They may even have little histories. And it all means nothing: Soldiers in most tactical wargames are the very definition of anonymity. In the Breach series, in Tegel's Mercenaries and Strike Squad, they're essentially globs of numbers in tiny suits, and not much else.

Sir-Tech's Jagged Alliance changed that forever. It made its soldiers—soldiers of fortune, in this case—seem human. It gave them voices (sometimes really obnoxious voices), relationships, and personalities. (The wimps would freak when they didn't have backup.) The numbers were just subtext; you were playing with people.

Deadly Games, the follow-up, builds on that solid foundation with features requested by the game's devoted following—a multiplayer mode, scenario and campaign editors, and a weapons shop—and a lot more of the good stuff that made the original a hit in the first place.



Not *America's Most Wanted*, but potential heroes.

If you haven't played Jagged Alliance—and if so, why the hell not?—you've got a wonderful surprise in store. I was a relative late-comer to this turn-based "role-playing strategy adventure," and was quickly captivated by its natural interface and its infatuation with the personal over the technical. In spirit, this isn't so much a strategy game as a mission-based adventure.

You sign up as many as 8 mercenaries from a pool of 70 (the whole sick crew from last time and some new recruits) and undertake a wide range of tasks: quick hits to retrievals to last-man-standing firefights.

Missions are played out from a top-down view on a scrolling map with a mouse-driven ease that is utterly beguiling. You'll find you're using the manual, which is delightful, more for the sake of clarification than for instruction.

The really fun part comes when your charges start reporting in their own distinctive voices when they've spotted something, botched up your instructions en route, run out of ammo, or just want to crow over a kill.

Those of you who have played JA won't be as surprised, but you'll still double your pleasure. Sir-Tech has included a second CD so you can play Deadly Games with a friend via modem, and with up to three other people on a network. If you have great scenarios in you, you now have the power to build them and chain them in a campaign sequence.

Even if you don't have ready access to human opponents, you won't find the program wanting. The higher levels of AI here do indeed produce deadly games. If your own mercs seem human, wait until you run into the enemy's.

The new features are natural inclusions, and nicely executed ones at that. The scenario editors are almost as intuitive as the game itself, and the second CD for multiplayer play is a thoughtful touch. Indeed, the only thing that rubbed me the wrong way about Deadly Games was the zoom mode for the map, which always deposited me to the top rather than centering on the active merc.

This is essentially Jagged Alliance Deluxe, and I'd like to see the game move beyond the flat jungle-clearing look and experiment with terrains of different altitudes.

But I have a feeling that what I'm describing is Jagged Alliance II. It's in the works. And until it surfaces, Deadly Games will do just fine.

GAMEPLAY:	B+
GETTING STARTED:	A
GRAPHICS:	B
SOUND CHECK:	A-
OVERALL	B+

Publisher: Sir-Tech
800-447-1230
www.sir-tech.com
Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486/66, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0 or higher, double-speed CD-ROM drive, sound card
List Price: $49.99

Add some nifty new features to the original's human touch, and you've got a winner of a wargame.



• Don't scrimp on your team. While it may be tempting to stock up on low-cost novices, it's useful to have someone on board who can deliver that quick, sure-fire kill. • If you have turns remaining after the job's done, use them: Don't withdraw from the mission area until you've given it a good search. Who knows what you'll find? • If it looks like you can grab it, you probably can. By the same token, be sure your crew goes out with enough vacant inventory slots to haul back anything interesting that it does find. • Don't feel you have to use up all your action points in a turn. You may want to save some for ripostes during the computer's move.

B-Movie maker

Steven Spielberg's Director's Chair

By Shane Mooney



Spielberg himself guides you through the arduous process of making a hit movie.

He made you cry with *Schindler's List*; he thrilled you with *Jaws* and *Jurassic Park*. Now he's elicited the least expected of responses with his latest work, Steven Spielberg's Director's Chair. Despite an impressive cast and reasonably complex gameplay, it's a yawn.

You start out as a cocky young novice director bent on getting his big break. Lucky for you, Spielberg has decided to take you under his wing and show you the ropes. You'll come to find out that there's more to making movies than having everyone smile pretty for the camera. Your goal is to produce a solid production, including script, filming, and special effects, all under budget and on time. Succeed and your movie will be a hit at the film festival, and you'll be rewarded with a bigger budget and more control. Fail, and you'll be cast aside like yesterday's newspaper.



You're a lousy writer? No problem. *Aladdin*'s Ted and Terry will help you hammer out your next blockbuster.



TIPS

- **Let Ted and Terry write the script until you get more familiar with the process of scriptmaking.**
- **Access your assistant's pager whenever you have questions. She usually gives helpful advice.**
- **Pay attention to the advice that "the pros" give. They are telling you to do things certain ways for a reason.**

This three-CD set takes you step by step through the process of making a movie, which casts Jennifer Aniston, Penn & Teller, and Quentin Tarantino, who plays a wrongly convicted felon about to be "strapped into old Sparky."

For starters, you're going to need a script. Good thing you have the help of Ted and Terry, the dynamic duo behind *Aladdin*. Naturally, they're the ideal candidates for a prison flick. Using a rough outline, you pick what scenes you want them to write and how you want them laid out in the final script. Then it's on to filming. Here you choose what scenes you want to shoot, and then roll camera.

Like many movie productions, you're plagued with delays: the paint on the electric chair isn't dry yet; it's going to take 40 minutes of makeup to get Aniston ready; and so on. You'll need to carefully calculate how you'll be able to shoot everything within so many days, or risk going over-budget and ruining your career.

Once you've cut and printed the scenes you want, it's time to edit. You'll splice film and add sound effects and music to set the tone, which can be dramatic or comedic. Once you're satisfied with the result, you'll premiere it and see how it's accepted.



A cast of A-list actors turns in a surprisingly B-grade performance, although some of the little touches are entertaining.

Joining forces with Knowledge Adventure, the people who brought you 3D Dinosaurs, Spielberg's first venture into multimedia seems to have been built on the same technology of years gone by, and thus, the quality is surprisingly outdated for such a cutting-edge director. The controls are touchy, the graphics are staid, and the video is Quentin Taran-TINY. The video actors (calling them "actors" is a BIG stretch) are pasted onto still backgrounds and have a very sloppy look.

Essentially, what it boils down to is just stepping through the paces of putting together a pre-designed movie using all the various parts. You can edit things like sound effects, which can change the movie a tad, but you can't drastically change the movie without turning it into a confusing mess. That makes the replay factor all too limited.

If you're fascinated by the process of moviemaking, this is an excellent tutorial on what goes on behind the scenes, showing all the complexity of Tinseltown's games. But for the average gamer, this title offers too little bang for the gaming buck.

GAMEPLAY:	C+
GETTING STARTED:	B+
GRAPHICS:	C+
SOUND CHECK:	B-
OVERALL	C+

Publisher: Knowledge Adventure
800-542-4240
www.adventure.com
Platform: Win/Mac CD
Requires: 486DX2/66, 8MB RAM, Win 3.1 or Win 95, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse
List Price: $54.95

This dated-looking title, though somewhat informative, is crippled by lackluster technology, limited replay value, and difficult controls.


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Marathon 2: Durandal

It's not just for Macintoshes any more. Marathon 2, Bungie Software's incandescent 3D action game, has been exported to Windows 95. And boy, have we been missing something.

It's easy to sum up the potential negatives. With the market glutted with Doom-style and better-than-Doom-style games, do we really need one more?

GAMEPLAY:	A-
GETTING STARTED:	C
GRAPHICS:	A-
SOUND CHECK:	B+
OVERALL	B+

Publisher: Bungie Software
800-295-0060
www.bungie.com
Platform: Win 95 CD
Requires: 486/66, 8MB RAM, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive
Estimated Street Price: $39

With the help of a smart, intricate plot, this shoot-'em-up shines.

But Marathon 2 isn't just one more. It's a leader, not a follower. The great virtue of the whole Marathon series—a third game, Marathon Infinity, had just been completed for the Mac as we went to press—is the tight integration of story with shooting. Three years after Doom, that's still in short supply.

You aren't simply blasting and button-pushing your way to the level exit. You're unfolding an elaborate tale in stylish nuggets gleaned from computer terminals linking you to a rogue artificial intelligence (the Durandal of the title). The story is the main focus, not an afterthought, and you're participating rather than just going along for the ride.



Careful—shoot those men, and they'll shoot you back.

Adding to that sense of involvement is the inclusion of other people. You're not the only one fighting, and will often be joined by computer-controlled squads of human fighters. They move around, they chat (audibly) with each other, and they're decent shots. You can't control them—though you can piss them off by shooting them—but, still, you won't feel alone.

And Marathon's tough-love saved-game policy makes it all that much more intense. You can't just park your game anywhere; you'll have to find a special terminal that records your progress, and they're just far enough apart to make things interesting.

Beyond that, it's a nice conversion. The hi-res graphics are brilliant, and the pace is smooth on a Pentium 133. You won't miss anything for not having played the original Marathon. This is a much more sophisticated creation.

One hitch: I had consistent problems with memory-related crashes at boot.

Welcome to the IBM, guys.

—Peter Olafson

Bug!

Think of Bug! as the *Happy Days* of PC gaming. It's not very challenging intellectually and it doesn't offer a single splatter of gratuitous violence, unless you count spewing a colorful spitwad at an attacking arachnid. It's just good, clean fun.

If you've ever played Sonic the Hedgehog, Sega's most famous gamester who made his name on the Genesis game system, you'll feel right at home with Bug! The gameplay and backgrounds are remarkably similar, with the hero making his way through a variety of worlds, avoiding and neutralizing an array of flying, crawling, and hopping critters. But Bug! definitely offers more colorful scenery and more cleverly designed creatures.



Ahh...how cute. Funny thing is, it's actually fun.

What's more, Bug! maneuvers in a three-dimensional world. While Sonic was stuck in two dimensions, Bug! can move forward and backward as well as left/right and up/down.

The story is that a bunch of Bug!'s buddies have been shanghaied by Queen Cadavra, an agile, ugly arachnid. Bug!'s job is to go find them and figure out a way to release them. His main weapons: agility, a bouncing behind, and four different flavors of spitwads he picks up along the trail.

The road is a long one, including 6 worlds and 18 levels to navigate. But even at the harder of the 2 levels of difficulty, few gamers–including kids–should have too much trouble learning to get around.

And the game's great sound effects and Bug!'s wisecracks make the trip even more entertaining.

The only real knock on Bug! is its slow performance at higher resolutions. The action is fast and responsive if you run in low-resolution, full-screen DOS mode, and things move pretty well if you run in the tiny default window under Windows 95. But if you expand this view, you'll find Bug! moving slower than a beetle through molasses, even with a system that's faster than the recommended platform.

–Sam Marshall

GAMEPLAY:	B+
GETTING STARTED:	A
GRAPHICS:	B
SOUND CHECK:	B
OVERALL	B+

Publisher: Sega Entertainment Inc.
800-734-2725
www.sega.com/segapc
Platform: Win 3.1/Win 95 CD
Requires: 486DX/100, 8MB RAM, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, sound card
List Price: $34.95

You'll dig this earthy, fun 3D adventure, if you're patient enough to wait out the slow hi-res performance.



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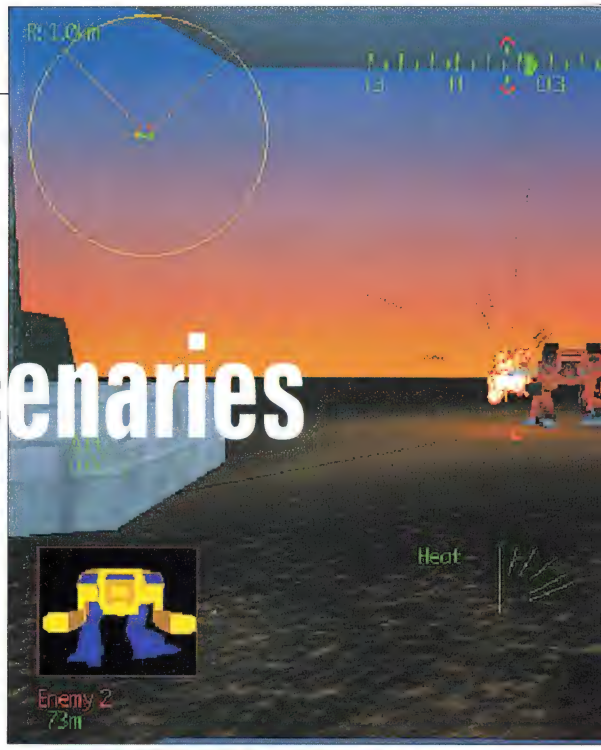
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MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries

Edited by Steve Klett



This is about as close as you'll want to be to the enemy.

You're not fighting for honor anymore, MechWarrior—you're fighting for cold hard cash. Which, of course, means that everyone is more ruthless, deadly, and self-serving than ever in the BattleTech universe. What's worse is you're now fighting in Inner Sphere BattleMechs, which are weaker than anything you've piloted before. To say the least, it can be tough making a living.

Not to worry. We've gone to the source—Activision's MechWarrior design team—to find the best way to build a successful career as a Mech Mercenary. (And, if you're really without honor, you can find all the cheats for the game in this month's Cheats section.) If you want to live to retirement age, read on.

Mission Selection

Choosing missions is a critical component for success—you don't want to pick missions that are too tough early on or your career will be a short one. Start out by accepting several of the quick-hit, 300,000-to-500,000-C-Bill and out missions. This will enable you to buy new toys for your BattleMech, and perhaps hire a lance-mate, before tackling a campaign.

Campaigns are long, consisting of several missions, and offer the most money, but they also come with substantial risks. Usually a campaign will be offered twice before another mercenary unit takes the job, at which point the contract will vanish from the ComStar computer forever. As a mercenary you don't have to take any one mission to complete the game, so don't worry about missing out on a particular contract. In a few rare cases you may find that there is only one contract available. Hey, sometimes work is hard to find.

Winning and Losing

If you find yourself repeatedly failing a mission, remember that in Mercenaries you can lose missions and still continue the game. In fact, there are an additional 15 or so missions that can only be discovered if you lose other missions. There are even a few rare losing-path missions that actually offer you more money than the equivalent winning-path mission. Remember, you don't have to eject to lose a mission; just hit Ctrl-Q to retreat from the field.

How do you know when to win and when to lose? You don't. What happens when you win or lose depends entirely on the plot of the campaign. Some missions will have serious consequences if you lose them; in other missions, your failure may have little effect on the BattleTech universe. Often (especially early in the game), losing missions will be easier than their winning counterparts. Still, losing a mission means losing money, and that will set you back over the course of the game.

Customizing BattleMechs

Customization is a powerful tool, as any player of the earlier Clan versions of MechWarrior 2 can tell you. Customization will cost you quite a bit in Mercenaries, but that expenditure is minimal considering the additional firepower you can get out of your BattleMech. The first thing you should do with any new BattleMech is move the weapons from the arms to the safer and better armored torso sections.

If you're not very accurate, you should configure your BattleMech with an array of energy weapons or long-range missiles that lock on and home in on a target. All BattleMechs should have at least a few energy weapons for those long battles where ammunition will run short.

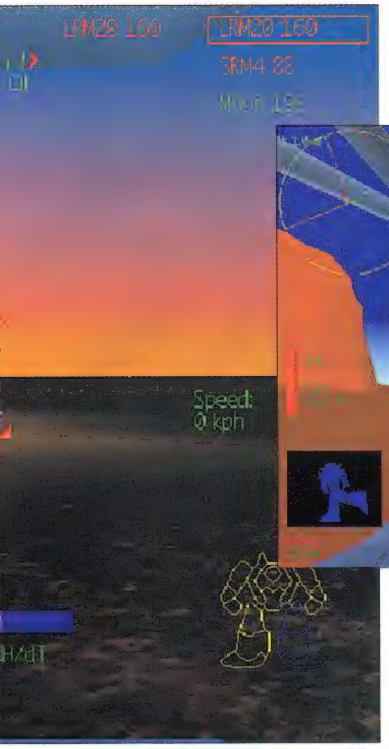
Some BattleMechs are also considered death-traps by many MechWarriors. The two most dangerous BattleMechs are the Jenner and the Catapult. Both of them have the cockpit placed in a forward, easily targeted location, making it simple for enemies to destroy them with a single volley. The Atlas has a similar weakness, but it's not quite as pronounced.

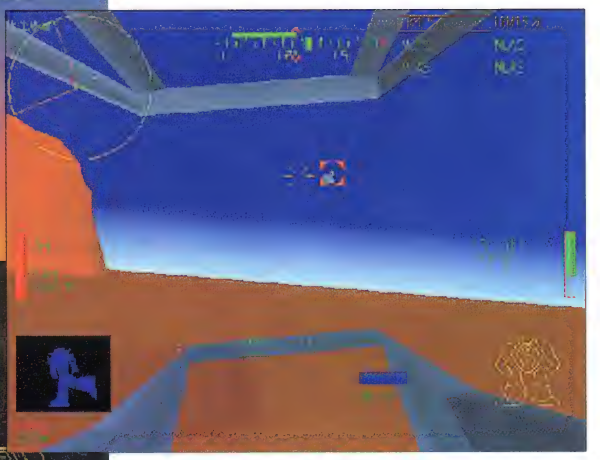
Lance-mates

Hiring additional MechWarriors can save your life in the later missions. Most MechWarriors-for-hire have learned the finer art of group-firing their weapons. In the right kinds of BattleMechs (the Flashman is a good example) this can be extremely effective. Some MechWarriors may also know how to accurately lead an enemy target (meaning they will rarely, if ever, miss) or shoot out an enemy's legs. Without lance-mates you have little chance of surviving the last few campaigns.

Remember, you should always save the best BattleMech for yourself. As skilled as your MechWarrior pilots are, you are probably the best MechWarrior in your unit.


Ready—draw!





Remember to look up.

Mission-Specific Hints

Campaign: New Ivaarsen

Mission: Dagger Strike

Enter the enemy base and stay there. After the base is destroyed and the patrol returns, stay in the base and snipe at the patrol until you wear them down. If you try to engage four enemy BattleMechs in the open, you're taking some big chances.

Mission: Paper Tiger

Don't slow down, don't try to fight—just keep moving.

Mission: Fox Hunt

Run like the wind. Don't fight anybody you don't have to. If you do stop to fight, win quickly or cripple your enemy so he can't pursue.

Campaign: Gravenhague

Mission: Glittering Gold

At the beginning of this mission you will be attacked from different directions. Choose one direction and assault the enemy on that side, moving quickly toward that one side and engaging aggressively. If you destroy your chosen enemy quickly enough, you can turn to face the second group of enemies before they can fire at your back. Make sure you destroy all the enemies in the field before you approach the town. Once you destroy all the ambushers, move quickly to the town to protect the water tanks. The Dread Legion won't start destroying the tanks until it's obvious that its ambush has failed.



Never stop moving! Make yourself hard to target.

Campaign: Sigurd

Mission: Warning Shot

After you destroy the pirate base you will face one of the first attacks by the invading Clans. One group will go after your DropShip. Leave them—your DropShip is as good as dead. To earn the respect of Clan Wolf (and thereby earn the right to live), you have to destroy the Clan star that attacks you. Watch for enemy BattleMechs that are group-firing, and concentrate your fire on them first.

Mission: Freedom Fight

There are two nuclear powerplants in the old pirate base at the beginning of this mission. Pirates reactors' aren't known for their stability, or their extensive back-up safety systems.

Mission: Exodus

You have a pirate ally on this mission. Let him do a lot of the fighting for you. If you miss the DropShip at the first Nav-Point, you'll have to face a Clan Commander in one-on-one combat for the final landing zone. If you can, save an autocannon for this final encounter.

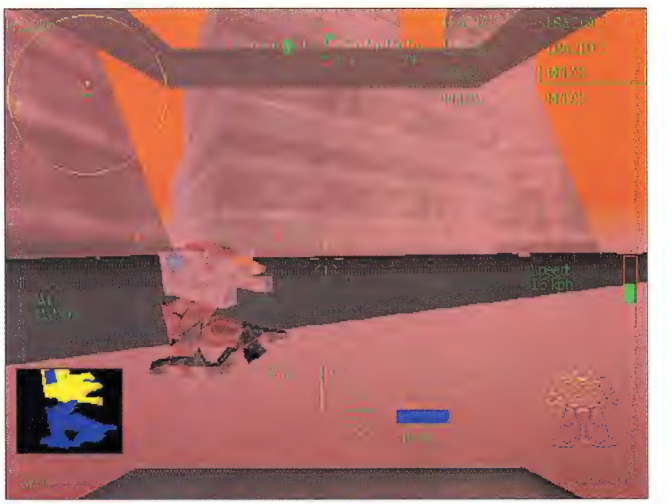
Campaign: Wolcott

Mission: First Strike

Bring at least three BattleMechs on this mission, including your own. Protect the transport helicopter: the land mines that it lays will be very effective in destroying the enemy DropShips.

Mission: Homestead

In this mission the enemy will attempt to draw you away from the supply depot by attacking and then fading away before returning to attack again. Don't be fooled: if one enemy starts to retreat, another one is coming in from another side. If you lose this mission, the next mission is a little easier.



Always lead your target.

Mission: Dragon's Teeth

You need to use LRMs or SRMs against the elementals at the beginning of this mission, don't try to hit them with lasers unless you are very accurate. When you encounter the Clan Commander, strip off his arms and then take off a leg. You definitely want at least a couple of lance-mates along for this mission. Watch out for attacks from the flanks and the rear, especially as you get close to the Clan Commander.

(Special thanks to Dustin Browder, Mercenaries' lead game designer/writer and MechWarrior extraordinaire, for assistance with this article.)

WAR



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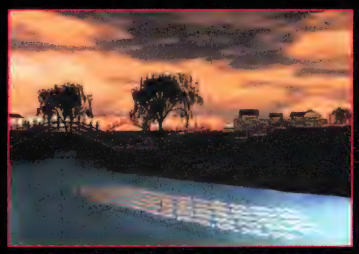
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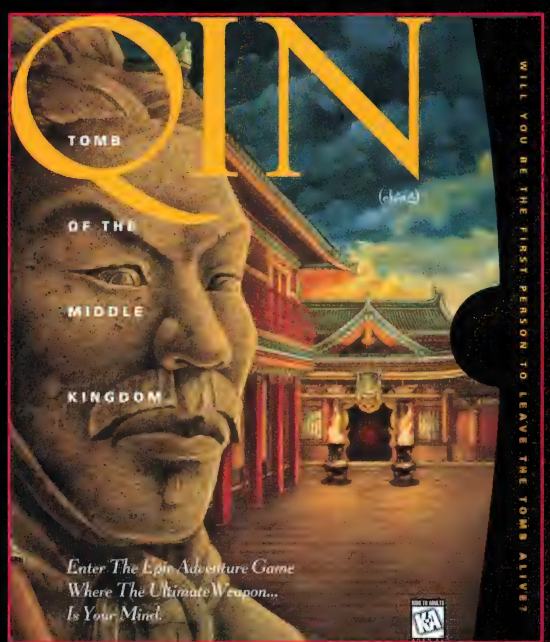
—STEVEN GREENLEE, COMPUTER GAME REVIEW

QIN

(CHING)

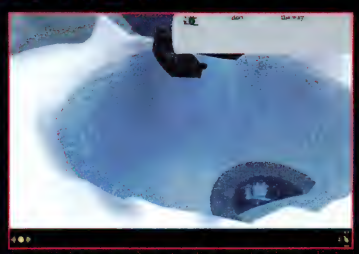
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Cheats

Classic Cheats, Part II

If you can't beat 'em—cheat!

This month, we're capping off our oldies tribute with codes for the three games that have sparked by far the most mail. Warcraft II continues to be the hands-down winner, as the letters keep flooding in asking us for help with this strategy standout. Sim City 2000 (jeez—how long's this game been out?) is another frequent source of pleading, as would-be engineers have at it in their fascinating worlds of creation. Finally, there's Mortal Kombat 3, an oldie-but-goodie PC fighter that yearns to have its spine ripped out and waved proudly aloft. You've asked, we've answered, and you've got the cheats. Now go use 'em!

Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness
Warcraft II: Beyond the Dark Portal

While playing the game, hit Enter, then type one of the following codes:

GLITTERING PRIZES: Adds gold and lumber to your resources.

VALDEZ: Adds oil to your resources.

DECK ME OUT: Upgrades all technologies immediately.



EVERY LITTLE THING SHE DOES: Upgrades your magic users with all spells.

HATCHET, AXE AND SAW: Dramatically increases lumber harvesting speed.

ON SCREEN: Displays the entire map area.

MAKE IT SO: All buildings, units, and upgrades are built at an accelerated rate.

IT IS A GOOD DAY TO DIE: Your units are invulnerable to everything except a direct Catapult hit, and they will inflict 255 points of damage on each enemy they hit.

UNITE THE CLANS: Win current scenario.

YOU PITIFUL WORM: Lose current scenario.

THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE: Jump to final movie.

NEVER A WINNER: Makes victory impossible.

DISCO: Changes the music (works only in Beyond the Dark Portal).

To jump scenarios: type TIGERLILY, hit Enter, and type ORCx (where "x" is a number between 1 and 14) or HUMANx (where "x" is a number between 1 and 14).

SimCity 2000

Type All Platforms and Win 95 cheats during gameplay.

All Platforms

CASS: Get money or a disaster (15% chance of a disaster).

FUND: Receive a $10,000 bond (at 25% interest).

JOKE: Hear a joke.

Windows 3.1x

To use these cheats, click on the top of the toolbar, then type them in.

OIVAIZMIR: Debug.

GOMORRAH: Nuclear meltdown.

BUDDAMUS: 500,000, all rewards activated.

GILMARTIN: Military base.

NOAH: Starts a flood.

MOSES: Stops a flood.

MRSOLEARY: Starts a fire.

You can also click on the centering tool, then click on the 'copter to shoot it down.

Win 95

IMACHEAT: $500,000, all rewards activated.

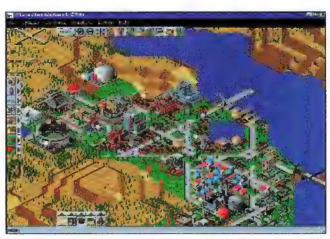
PRISCILLA: Debug Menu

GILMARTIN: Military base.

NOAH: Starts a flood.

Network Edition: Windows 95

Open the chat window and say to everyone, "Klatu Verata Nictu." You'll get a cheat item on the menu bar that allows for changes in item prices, getting all special tiles and all rewards.



Mortal Kombat 3



When executing the game, use the following commands instead of C:\MK3\MK3 (substituting directory names and drives if need be):

C:\MK3\MK3 1000000: Play as Motaro or Shao Kahn (works only in two-player games).

C:\MK3\MK3 0666: Lets you play Smoke.

C:\MK3\MK3 1995: Makes all players invisible.

C:\MK3\MK3 9966: Flips everyone around (backward).

C:\MK3\MK3 8000: Enables Turbo mode.

C:\MK3\MK3 8888: Makes all players very wide.

C:\MK3\MK3 1111: Makes players very small.

C:\MK3\MK3 12345: Makes players very tall.

C:\MK3\MK3 54321: Makes players very short.

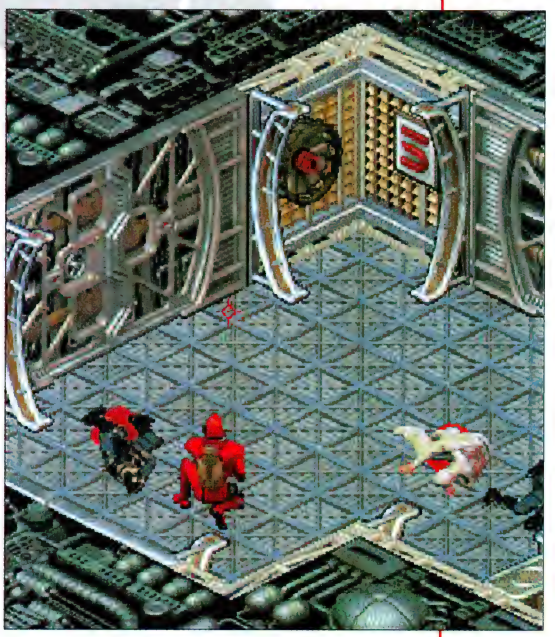
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CHEATS

New Cheats

Crusader: No Regret

The Red Guy's back, and he's got new weapons, new missions...and some truly devastating cheats.



To begin a mission in the Cheat Room (warp to the right "egg"), type four things at the DOS prompt: the Regret command, the warp command (including the mission you want), the egg command (which is always 250), and the skill level (ranging from 1 to 4). So, assuming you wanted to go to the Cheat Room for Mission 6, at the hardest level, you'd type "regret -warp 6 -egg 250 -skill 4" and hit Enter. The game will start and you'll appear in a small, squarish room filled with goodies and a teleporter. Simply grab the items and step onto the teleporter to begin the mission.

Typing Crusader: No Remorse's JASSICA16 code doesn't enable the cheats; enter it, and you'll hear strange renditions of Christmas music and be attacked by eight RoboDraygans. To access the cheats, type LOOSECANNON16 during the game. You'll get a notice saying the cheats are on. You can now do the following:

- **Press F10 after dying to bring you back to life. You'll have all the items you had when you died.**
- **Press F10 while you're still alive to get full energy, full ammo, one of each type of weapon, one clip of each type of ammo, and a full item inventory with as much of each item type as you can carry. Pressing F10 a second time gives you 99 clips of each kind of ammo.**
- **Press Ctrl-F10 to become invincible. Note: using a teleporter will make you vulnerable again. Hit Ctrl-F10 again to regain your invincibility.**

Finally, here's an undocumented feature in the game: When you use a watch station to take control of any type of gun or turret (but not a Servomech), you can press Shift-↑ and the gun will explode. That way, the gun won't attack you when you enter its area.

Harvester

You know, this game's freaking me out. I think it's time to get the hell out of here RIGHT NOW...



Type the following codes during gameplay:

NICK: Restores Steve's health.

MURDERER: Gives Steve the important weapons.

SON OF SAM: Gives Steve many other useful items.

BRUCE: Invincibility during combat.

DUSTIN: Warp to Level 1 of the Lodge.

BOSTON STRANGLER: Warp to Level 2 of the Lodge.

HELTER SKELTER: Warp to Level 3 of the Lodge.

CHARLES MANSON: Warp to the end of Level 3 of the Lodge.

SEE MORE Online
http://www.pcgamesmag.com

MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries

Fighting for money instead of Clan honor may be fun, but it's tough. Not to worry: With these cheats, you'll have an unbeatable competitive edge—and you won't lose any honor by using 'em.

While holding down Ctrl-Alt-Shift, enter the following codes (during gameplay):

SUPERFUNKICALIFRAGISEXY: Toggles invulnerability.

ISEENFIREANDISEENRAIN: Toggles unlimited ammo.

OOOHHHLLLAAALLLAAA: Toggles heat tracking.

ITSDABOOOMB: Nukes targeted Mech.

INMYBEAUTIFULBALLOON: Adds Jumpjets to your Mech.

REDJACKANDTIKRULES: Destroy targeted Mech.

LIKETHECOMSTARBABY: Successfully complete mission.

ONTIMEEVERYTIME: Toggles time compression.

CRAZYSEXYCOOL: Toggles infinite Jumpjets.

BEHOLDMYGLORY: Free-eye mode.

ANTIJOLT: Toggles time expansion.

FLASHYFLASHY: Toggles auto-grouping.

Deadlock

Gallius IV's yours for the taking—with a little Earth-style weaseling.

To use the cheats, hit Ctrl-F1 during gameplay, then type a code on the line. Note: Cheats work only in single-player games.

FRODO: Completes research on the current technology project.

GHOTI: Maxes the population in all of your territories.

TOUCHE: Allows you to select and view any video.

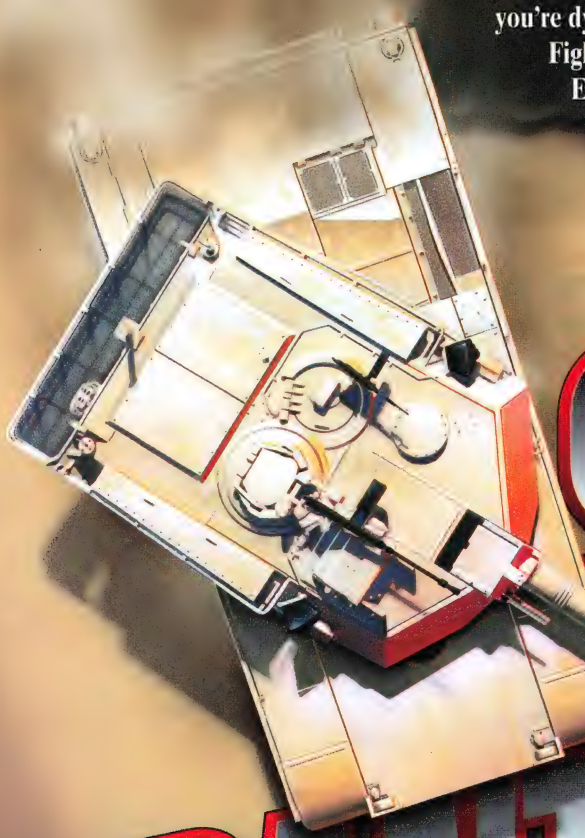
MAKE IT SO: Gives you 5,000 credits and 100 of each resource in each of your territories.



CHEATS

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New Cheats



Xenophage

Umm, umm, umm, that's some tasty violence. Sure'd be nice if there was more blood, though. And no gravity. And more blood. And you were invisible. And more blood...

Type these cheats at the Fight Screen:

BISHOP: The announcer says "You suck!"

BLOOD: More blood flies off each of the fighters.

GLASSJAW: Stuns your opponent after each punch or kick; stuns you if you're punched and kicked. Hit a stunned fighter again, and he'll become active again.

HELIUM: Lowers gravity.

INVISIBLE: Both fighters become invisible.

ORCHID: When Selena's on the screen, makes her grow.

SHADOWS: Fighters become invisible except for their shadows.

STAIN: Blood that flies off the fighters stains the ground.

THOUGHTJINX: Both fighters fall down and die. They'll keep doing it till you type the code again.

At the Main Menu, enter one of these codes:

CHAMPS: Lets you select any one of the three bosses—Parasite, Champion, or the Grand Champion—in the Choose Player screens. (Can also be entered at Player Select Screen.)

XACMAN: Lets you access the XacMan minigame from the Main Menu.

To battle the secret fighter, Blarney, edit the XPR.INI file with a text editor, making sure to back up the file first. Below the [Xenophage] heading at the top, change the value for Player2 to Player2=Blarney. Run the game and select Free Play mode, and you'll see that Blarney is the name of Fighter 2, or select him from the Choose Player 2 menu. To play as Blarney, simply change the value for Player1 in the XPR.INI file to Player1=Blarney.

MegaRace 2

A map, more money, faster car—this rules!

When entering the name of the game at the DOS prompt, add one or more of the following cheats (i.e., MEGARACE GAME MONEY SPEED):

DEBUG: While driving, hit O to turn the car into the stumps that are on the track; press I to return to normal.

MONEY: Gives you 99,999 money (you have to start a new game for this one to work).

GAME: Skips the intro and takes you straight to the main menu.

MAP: Gives you a map of the whole track while racing.

NOLANCE: Keeps Lance Boyle from hassling you.

SPEED: Makes your car go faster.

TESTPRIZE: Tests the prize screens (reset your machine to stop it).

NBA Full Court Press

Rodman, Shaq—who needs 'em? You've got some slick moves of your own.

Type these codes during gameplay.

TOPSPEED: Run as fast as possible.

LINEDANCE: Do a line dance.

MOVEDANCE: Do a moving line dance.

In the setup registry, enter these cheats at the DEBUG line:

ZAPSHOTS: Make every shot.

CLOSEDLID: Play with a lid over the basket.

Virtua Fighter PC

Sick of the same old fighters? Try a little Dural on for size...

To play as Gold Dural or Silver Dural, press Down, Up, Right, then Del-Left in the Character Selection menu. If it worked, you'll hear a "woosh" sound. Want to add Dural to the Records screen? Go to the Press Start screen and hit Up 17 times, then Enter. Now go to the Options screen. You should hear a voice say "Ring Out." Dural's stats are now on the Records screen. To adjust Ring Size and Stage Select, go to the Press Start screen and hit Up 12 times, then Enter.



Is a certain game driving you nuts? Can't figure out how to kill an enemy, solve a puzzle, or find a key? We can help! Send your cheat-code requests to *PC Games*, Attn: Strategy & Tactics, 951 Mariner's Island Blvd., Suite 700, San Mateo, CA 94404; fax: 415-349-7482; e-mail: ccohen@pcgamesmag.com.

CHEATS

Compiled by Corey Cohen

SEE MORE Online
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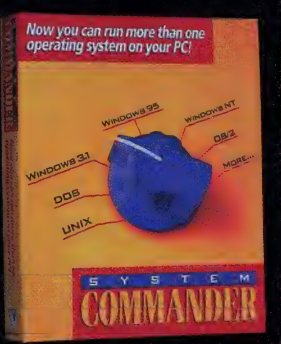
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PC GAMES INDEX

Index of Games Reviewed by PC GAMES in 1996

Thumb back through your stacks of discs, and you can tell it's been one big year for games. And it's been one big year for PC Games, where we've reviewed a whopping 308 games. Here is a list of all our game reviews in 1996. Cut it out or use it as a reminder to check out the reviews on our Web site, at **http://www.pcgamesmag.com.**

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Bad Mojo



Beavis and Butt-head in Virtual Stupidity

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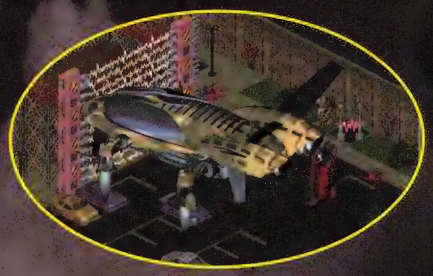
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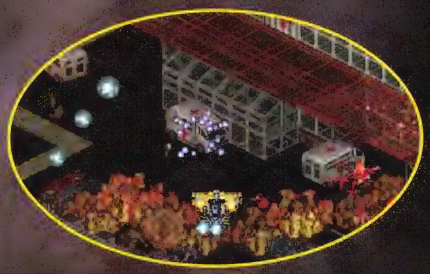
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Rebel Assault II: The Hidden Empire



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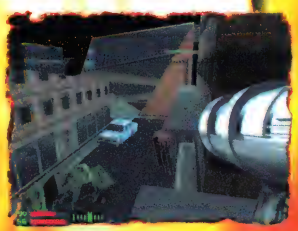
Weaponry: 20+ total.
Heat-seeking missiles.
Motion tracker.
Methods of Destruction:
NO LIMITS

Ground Combat. Rampage
by Jeep.
Aerial assault.
Modes of Combat:
NO LIMITS

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Control System:
NO LIMITS

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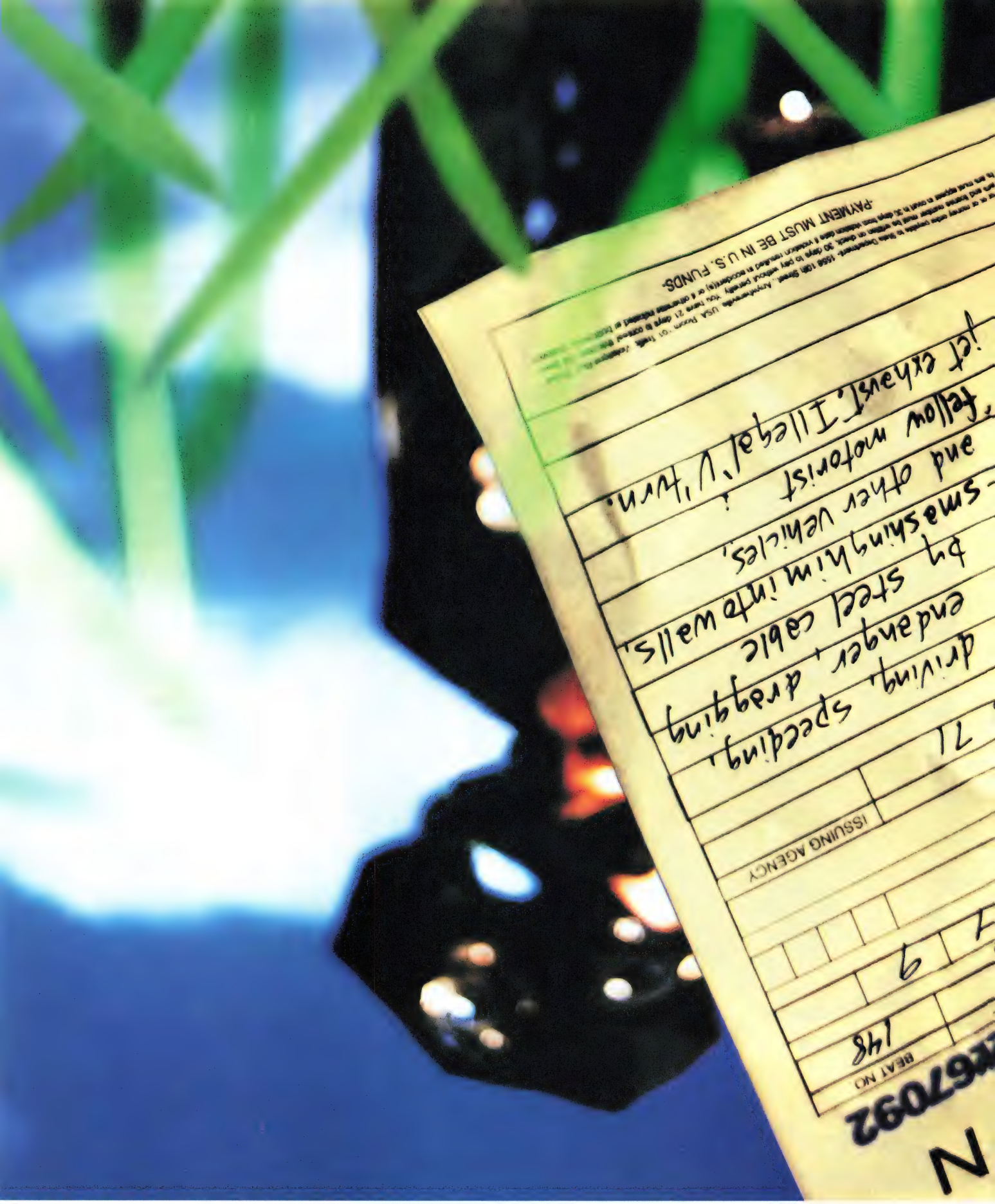
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Suspect erects "clothesline" between two pylons, knocks oncoming driver off his vehicle, steals said vehicle, then runs over driver repeatedly with it. Claims he was participating in a "friendly" game of "Rocket War."



Suspect drives at speeds in excess of 100 mph over speed limit, cutting off other drivers, endangering drivers by running them into walls and pylons. On the street, this is known as "Rocket Racing."



Suspect, armed with large ball attached to cable, drives erratically, smashing ball into oncoming vehicles, hurling ball at other drivers in an attempt to score points during illegal, unsanctioned game of "Rocket Ball."

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By Shane Mooney

Gaming a Go-Go



Fujitsu Monte Carlo

OK, your dirty little secret is out: It's not enough to be in a fragfest every waking moment you're at your desktop PC; you want to be blasting even on the road. But gaming and portable computers haven't been two great tastes that taste great together. Despite what your girlfriends tell you, size matters when it comes to computers. The tinier the equipment, the tinier the performance.

But laptops have finally come into their own. Although most portables max-out at the Pentium 133 level, that should be more than enough to run the majority of today's games. Before you make the portable plunge, though, you need to figure out what kind of games you plan on playing. If you're going to stick with turn-based wargames, speed isn't as important; you should go for comfort. If you're determined to play Descent II or Quake in hi-res, you're going to need a laptop with the latest and fastest technology. Be warned: state-of-the-art laptops are considerably more expensive than their similarly configured desktop cousins. It ain't easy squeezing all that performance—CPU, local-bus video, and everything else—into a footprint one-third or even one-quarter the size of your home system. Be prepared to pay.

After speed, the most important consideration is your screen. You'll need to decide between a dual-scan passive-matrix display or the considerably more expensive active-matrix screen. Passive-matrix displays are great for word processors but may not be up to snuff when it comes to today's demanding games. They have a slow refresh rate, making fast games look a bit jumpy. Active-matrix screens can add about $500 to the portable's cost, but you get what you pay for: crisper, more vivid colors and a faster refresh rate so there's not nearly as much jerkiness.

Also consider the peripherals you want. Are you planning on playing modem-to-modem with your friends? If so, you'll want to get a system with an internal modem. Do you have a lot of games that use MIDI music? Then you'll want a laptop with a wavetable sound card built in.

Pointing devices are another sticky issue. A few laptops offer a wireless, infrared link to connect the mouse to the computer. Most have some built-in variation of a mouse, such as a pointing stick or a trackball. If you're going to be playing games where pinpoint accuracy is a must, like Civilization II, you'll want to get comfortable with a pointing stick, which usually resides between the keys on the keyboard. The Fujitsu Monte Carlo has an interesting pointing device that's more akin to a very large pointing stick that rests below the keyboard. The choice of pointing device usually isn't a concern when buying a home system, since you can plug in virtually anything you want. However, when the device is built-in—as it is in most laptops—you definitely need to try it before you buy.

PC Games took a look at three laptops to see how well-suited they were for games. We told the companies that we were looking at the systems not as portable office machines, but for gaming on the go.

The Fujitsu Monte Carlo

One of the first systems we got our hands on also turned out to be the nicest. Not exactly known for gaming systems, Fujitsu has put together a sweet multimedia laptop that just happens to be an excellent gaming system.

First off, it comes with a Pentium 120 and 16MB of EDO RAM, which makes it as fast, if not faster, than many desktop systems. The 11.3-inch Super VGA active-matrix screen is also quite impressive, with a very sharp display. Fujitsu managed to fit a 1GB hard drive into the seven-pound frame. Naturally, there's a joystick port as well as a port to plug in a full-size external monitor. There are also some cutting-edge multimedia goodies like a wavetable, a Sound Blaster–compatible sound card and a 6X CD-ROM drive. Many argue that anything above a quad-speed is a waste because no games on the market take advantage of anything higher; still, it's nice to know that the Monte Carlo will avoid CD-ROM-speed obsolescence for at least the next 24 hours.



Compaq Armada 4130T

However, the lack of an internal modem is a major annoyance. Opening the damn thing is a minor annoyance. The Monte Carlo uses a funky clip design that takes awhile to master. It isn't very intuitive and definitely doesn't have a nice feel.

The system comes with built-in speakers that are OK as far as laptop speakers go. Thankfully, it has a knob to turn the volume up and down, unlike Compaq's computer, which has software-controlled volume. Alas, you'll still want to avoid raising the volume much higher than 80 percent unless you're into major distortion.

The Fujitsu computer's unique pointing device, sort of a large pointing stick or a small joystick, feels good to use, although the position of the buttons is a bit awkward.

When it comes to loading up the latest games, the Fujitsu shines. Win 95 games had no problems whatsoever and looked and played great. DOS games are a slightly different story. For some reason, the companies that shipped laptops for this review were apparently so caught up in the Win 95 world that they didn't think we would actually want to play a game—or do anything—from DOS. The Fujitsu is a perfect example: We had to configure our DOSSTART.BAT file to load CD-ROM drivers or we couldn't access our D: drive from DOS. Thankfully, the Monte Carlo gave us the least amount of problems in this area.

Because of the type of display that the Monte Carlo uses (the same kind as most laptops), DOS games play in what looks like letterbox mode. When you run a game in standard 320-by-200 VGA, each pixel is doubled in size, leaving small 40-pixel gaps at the top and bottom of the screen. Naturally, the video card that shipped with the Monte Carlo only supported the lower resolutions of Quake, but considering how small it is on the screen, you hardly notice.

Verdict: Fujitsu makes a great system for Win 95 titles, but it still needs work in DOS configuration. (Fujitsu; 888-466-8434; www.fujitsu.com; $3,894)

The Compaq Armada 4130T

Compaq's great multimedia notebook, the Armada 4130T, almost beat out the Monte Carlo. It's a much more expensive system that has a few nicer components but falls a tad short where it counts.

With a smoking Pentium 133 and 16MB of RAM, the Armada has little problem running EA's demanding baseball game Triple Play '97 under Windows 95. A large 11.8-inch display is easy on the eyes, but the system only comes with a quad-speed CD-ROM drive and the sound card is a standard FM synthesis card, so you don't get the fullness of wavetable sound.

Some convenient extras include a handle that doubles as an extra battery port and a touchpad that can be pulled out and easily replaced with a trackball. For those who love head-to-head play, the system comes with a PCMCIA 28.8 modem. Very cool.

Though the Armada boasts one-watt-per-channel speakers, they definitely lack volume and quality. The software-controlled volume control is easy enough to implement under Windows 95, but the sound isn't nearly as full as that of the Monte Carlo's speakers.

Like the Monte Carlo, the most frustrating thing about gaming with the Armada is dealing with DOS games. Once again, this laptop doesn't come configured to recognize the CD-ROM drive under DOS. There is some scant documentation within the AUTOEXEC.BAT and DOSSTART.BAT files that gives vague hints about what needs to be done. Unfortunately, it only makes things worse. Of the three systems compared, Compaq's is the most difficult to set up for DOS. But once it's configured, games like Quake and Duke Nukem 3D play very well.

Verdict: Another solid system for Windows, but the speakers and FM synthesis sound card are weak, and the problems with DOS setup are aggravating. (Compaq; 800-888-5858; www.compaq.com; $5,297)

continued on page 201

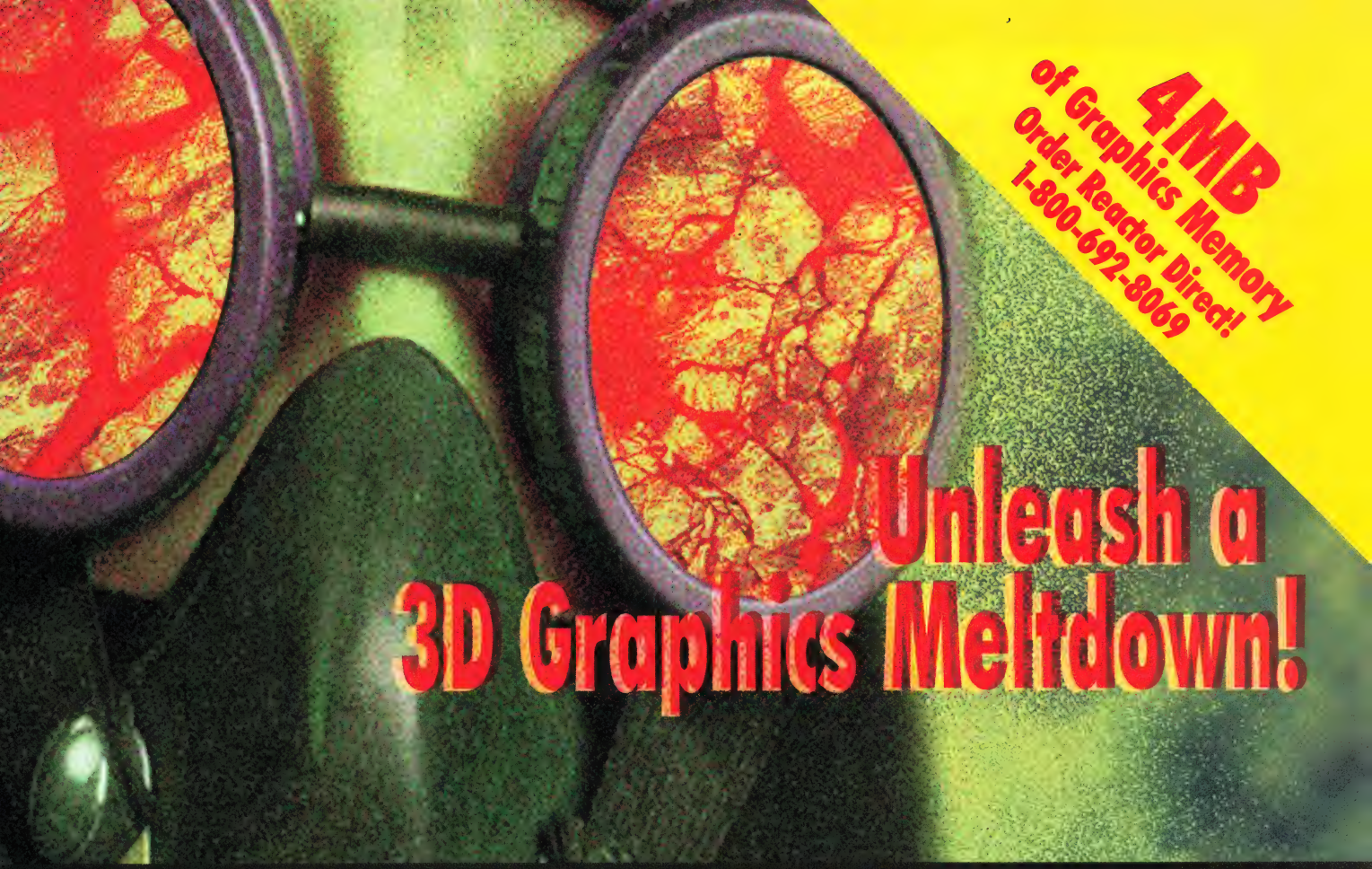
Portable Peripherals

Face it: Not even the priciest laptop is perfect. When you're trying to squeeze too much stuff into too little space, something's gotta give. And in the models that we looked at, nothing suffered quite as much as the speakers. When you're used to having Doom go BOOM on a desktop system, it can be quite the disappointment to have your double-barreled shotgun sound like a popgun. To solve the problem, we took a look at the LapTalk Speakers from New Media. They're designed specifically for laptops and hook right onto your system. The results are promising, though not triumphant. While they won't exactly rival your 100-watt stereo system, these speakers do provide much better sound in a minimal amount of space.

The company also makes a GAMEjammer sound card for people whose laptops don't have a sound card. This credit-card-sized plug-in card comes with a built-in speaker and joystick port. Obviously, the speaker's sound quality isn't the greatest, but it will do for those who want to break the silence of their laptop and aren't too fussy about quality. (New Media; 800-227-3748; www.newmediacorp.com; LapTalk Speakers, $150 suggested retail; GAMEjammer, $199 suggested retail)

Media Express Card

For those of you who actually have a handful of MPEG games but no MPEG board in your laptop to play them, Smart Modular Technologies might have the answer. Its new Type II PCMCIA card, based on Sigma Designs' REALmagic Explorer chipset, plugs into your laptop to offer MPEG-1 digital video playback. Boasting high-quality, full-screen video at 30 frames per second, the Media Express Card's CD-quality sound takes advantage of the LapTalk Speakers. (Smart Modular Technologies; 800-841-2739; www.apexdata.com; $250 suggested retail)



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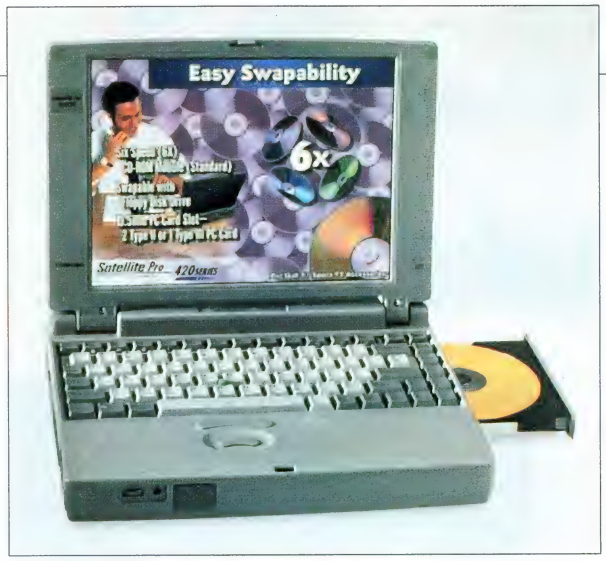
CD-ROM

HASBRO Interactive

www.hasbro.com WIN 95

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TECH SHOP, *continued from page 198*



Toshiba Satellite Pro 420 CDS

Toshiba Satellite Pro 420 CDS

For the price-conscious, there's the Toshiba Satellite Pro 420 CDS. While not sporting the fastest Pentium chip on the laptop market, it should be adequate for those whose gaming tastes are slower-paced. The Satellite Pro comes with a Pentium 100 but only 8MB of EDO RAM. It includes a 1.3GB hard drive and three floppy-disk drives. On the upside, it does have a Toshiba 6X CD-ROM drive. This puppy really shines when it comes to graphics, with its generous 2MB of video RAM mated to an 11.3-inch active-matrix color display. Naturally, there's a Sound Blaster Pro–compatible sound card, although again, it's garden-variety FM synthesis.

One unique feature is the incorporation of what Toshiba calls Zoomed Video (ZV) technology. ZV runs full-screen, full-motion MPEG video, as well as other video that requires special hardware decompression.

How well does it play games? Well, the Toshiba manages to do a decent job. However, because it ships with only 8MB of RAM, Windows 95 performance can be slow (at least until you add more RAM). But unless you sit at a computer all day (like us), you probably won't notice. Forget about running Quake from Windows with the standard 8MB of RAM, but games such as Chessmaster 5000 look and play great.

Like the other systems here, the Toshiba is fussy about setting up a DOS session, though it's somewhat easier overall than the Compaq. Running DOS games with only 8MB of RAM is also a problem, and games like MechWarrior 2 definitely suffer from the lack of resources. Fortunately, in Mech's case, it's playable in the lower resolutions.

Verdict: With its 100MHz Pentium, hardcore action gamers need not apply, but the Toshiba's crisp display makes Win 95 titles run nicely as long as they only need 8MB of RAM. (Toshiba; 800-457-7777; www.toshiba.com; $2,499)





By Rob Smith

Serving Quake Players

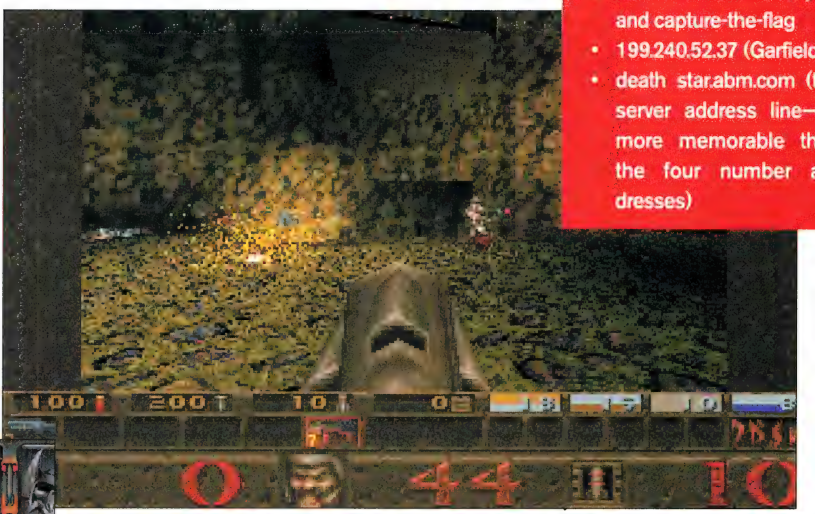
Getting connected to the tons of Quake servers providing sources of mayhem all over the world is a whole lot easier than you may imagine...

Servers that never sleep

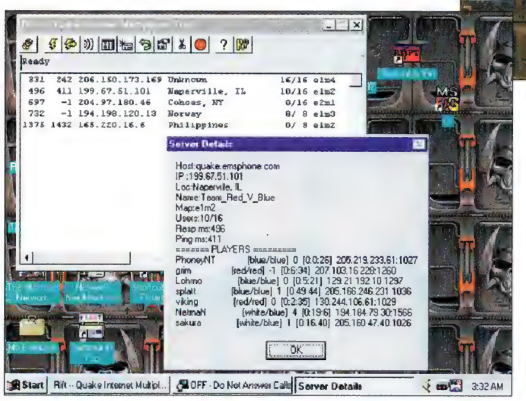
Here's a chronically limited choice of some of the servers we've tested with playable ping times:

- 199.67.51.101: team play and capture-the-flag
- 199.240.52.37 (Garfield)
- death star.abm.com (the server address line—it's more memorable than the four number addresses)

The patches that have taken Quake from its debut 0.92 version to the latest 1.06 on PC Games.EXE have made the game's Internet multiplayer aspect far more viable. This is where the real fun is, but it's also a source of headaches if connections don't go according to plan. So if you haven't gotten yourself connected yet, here's how to do it.



Online Quake's a blast, and when the connection is fast, it's truly awesome.

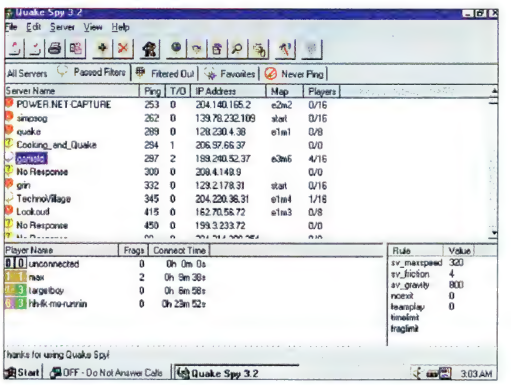


Rift can show details of all the people currently connected to a server.

First, read the whole *techinfo.txt* file on the Quake CD, especially the area dealing with TCP/IP protocols. And digest it! Unless you're blessed with a LAN, you'll need to run the *Q95.bat* file, which launches the Mpath-aided TCP/IP protocol and thereby enables the networking functions of Windows to be used by this DOS-based game.

For modem users, if there are any problems, the specific configuration string for a wide variety of makes and speeds is contained in the techinfo file. In practical terms, it seems that trying to log on to a server with a connection less than 28.8 baud is pointless—the game will simply be unplayable.

Most of the up-and-running servers are dedicated, meaning that one machine is left without anyone playing on it, doing all the donkey work of directing the huge quantity of data to the rest of the machines. If you want to play with a bunch of friends, a *listen* server will do the job. In this setup, the fastest system available should act as the server. Whoever uses that machine has a distinct advantage in that they will enter the levels first—and thus be able to arm themselves before everyone else—and generally have the faster speeds.



Easy-to-navigate layouts make Qspy a popular utility.

To make locating all the active Quake servers on the Internet a breeze, get a hold of either Rift or Quake Spy, two staggeringly useful utilities that launch your ISP (such as MSN, but not AOL and similar providers) and trot out into server-space, *ping* servers (send out a signal and time the response from each server—giving a score in milliseconds, the lower numbers indicating faster connections), and report back on their Quake findings. Both utilities are available from *PC Games*' Web site at **www.pcgamesmag.com**. You can also try **www.stomped.com** for a range of other files that will enhance your Quakeing.

Setting up your own Quake server is a simple task. It really should be set up as a dedicated server—launching Quake with the *-dedicated* string. Add the maximum number of players and the map you want to play, using the +map eXmX command string. For example, to set up a dedicated server for up to 16 players in Deathmatch level 3, type *quake -dedicated 16 +map dm3*.

Of course, you'll then want people to know about it, so inform any one of the Web sites that run updated server lists. Stomped is one, **quake.commonground.net** is another, and there are plenty more.

Even with 28.8 modem connections, in games with more than six players, you're likely to experience a skating feel as you move around. This makes true competition quite difficult, but then, not everyone has the luxury of using a T1 or ISDN line. Happy deathmatching...

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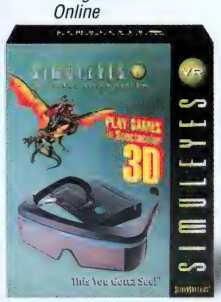


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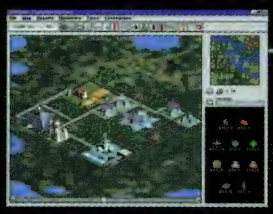
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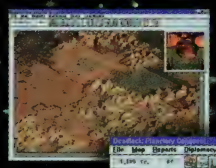
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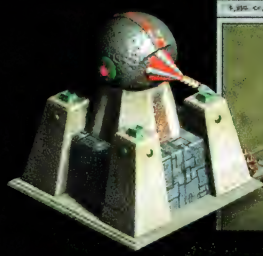






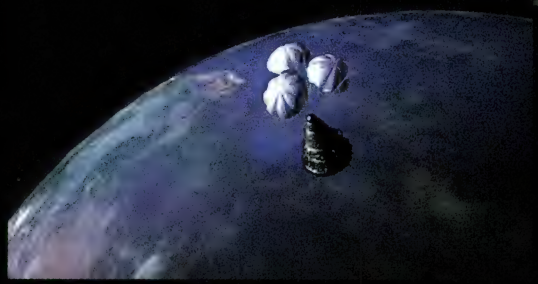


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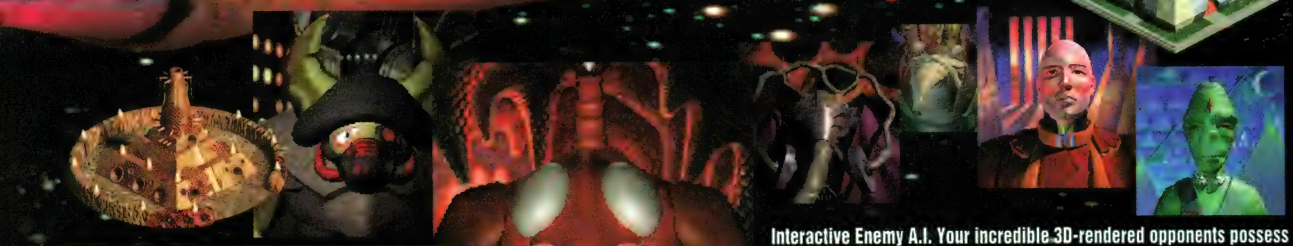
Look for the Deadlock playable demo in select magazines or online at http://www.accolade.com

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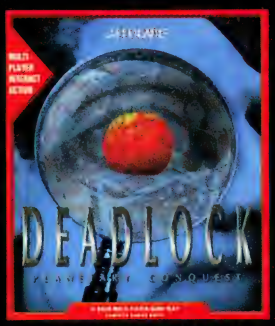
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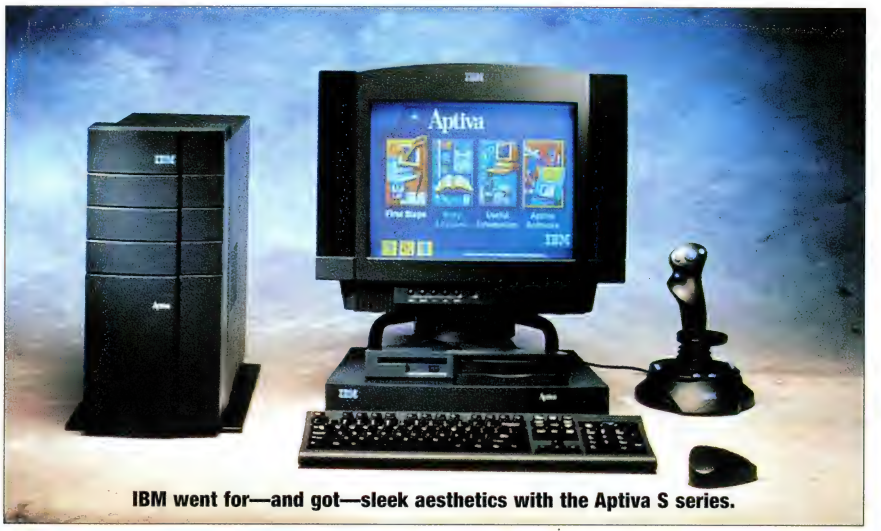
RATING PENDING
RP
ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE RATINGS BOARD

Hardware Spotlight

GOOD-LOOKING BUT NOT AIMED AT GAMERS

IBM Aptiva S

Rating: B-



IBM went for—and got—sleek aesthetics with the Aptiva S series.

Last year, Acer introduced its charcoal-cased PCs to take aim at the consumer market. Its goal was to make the PC as sleek, sexy, and approachable as any high-end consumer electronics device. If PCs looked good, the thinking went, they'd go right next to the stereo, VCR, and TV in the living room...or at least technophobe consumers would buy 'em.

Acer's strategy worked. Its Aspire series sold so well that Big Blue is following Acer's lead and upping the ante with its stylish Aptiva series.

The new Aptivas do look sophisticated, like PCs of the future. The tower portion is down below the desk (or, if you get long enough cables, in the closet), and you don't have to touch it or even look at it. Instead, everything you need is on the "media console," a slick little unit housing the power switch, CD-ROM drive, and floppy drive. It's about the size of a laptop and fits neatly under the monitor stand, which is about as hip as IBM could design. You can even snap the console shut when you're done and put the keyboard on top of it for the ultimate in space saving. Certainly, the Aptiva would look good on any gamer's desk (or in IBM's mind, in the living room).

The unit IBM sent us for review was a fine machine, and makes a good entry-level gaming system. Setting it up, even with the split-system design, was a breeze. The manuals are well-written and offer the important specs and info.

And it performs. Of course, we had the tricked out, top-of-the-line S78 with a Pentium 200 and 32MB of RAM, so it should perform. It handled our graphics-intensive games, and the MWave sound chip and in-monitor speakers cranked out the noise as loud as you could want—there was no distortion, even at 100 percent volume.

The cordless mouse, about which we were quite skeptical, even worked flawlessly with games such as Quake and Duke Nukem 3D.

However, unlike systems such as Falcon, Northwest's Mach V, the Aptivas are clearly aimed at the general consumer, not at the power-craving gamer.

The Aptiva includes an ATI 3D Rage chip with 2MB VRAM that performed pretty well with everything we threw at it, but you can't upgrade the VRAM at all. It would also have been nice to at least have IBM offer the option for a Vérité, PowerVR or 3Dfx card. It's clear in the marketing and feel of the Aptiva that gamers are not the primary target; they're an afterthought. It shows in the bundle software (lots of productivity tools, edutainment, and just four slightly outdated games: Mech 2, Battle Beast, The Lost Mind of Dr. Brain, and Jungle Book), and the overall "feel" of the machine—you launch it and are assaulted by a "here are your computer/Windows basics" tutorial.

The Aptiva is a fairly easy system to work on. The case comes off pretty easily and most everything on the motherboard is reasonably accessible, with the exception of the video memory, but you can't upgrade that anyway. The VRAM sockets are blocked by the "riser card," which sits atop and connects to the motherboard. It houses the PCI and ISA slots, so those are easily accessible.

Big Blue's Aptiva series is sure to be popular with Joe Consumer because of its sleek, sophisticated look. But for the price (especially since you're practically forced to buy the monitor for the full aesthetic effect), hardcore gamers looking for their next game box would do well to check out other systems such as NEC's PowerPlayer series. *—Willem Knibbe*

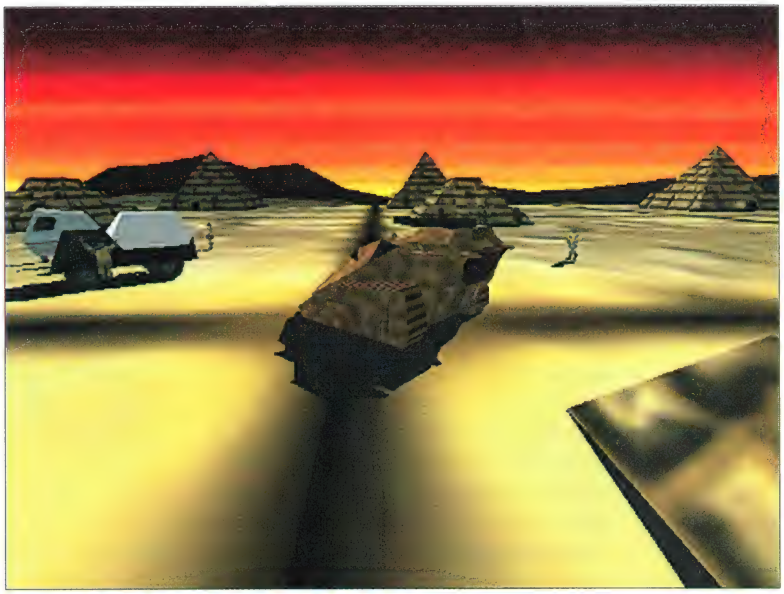
	Aptiva S64	Aptiva S66	Aptiva S74	Aptiva S78
CPU	P166	P166	P200	P200
RAM	16MB	16MB	16MB	32MB
Hard Drive	2.5 GB	3.2GB	2.5GB	3.2GB
Video	ATI 3D Rage	ATI 3D Rage	ATI 3D Rage	ATI 3D Rage
VRAM	2MB	2MB	2MB	2MB
CD-ROM	8X	8X	8X	8X
Cordless Mouse	Optional	Standard	Optional	Standard
Joystick	Optional	Standard	Optional	Standard
Price	$2,499	$2,649	$2,799	$3,099

Notes: Add $499 for a 15-inch monitor or $799 for a 17-inch monitor, both of which include built-in microphone and speakers. An optional subwoofer is $99. All systems' RAM can be upgraded to 128MB maximum, and they all have a 256K cache that can be upgraded to 512K.

NO SPEED DEMON

Matrox Mystique

Rating: C-



Scorched Planet, accelerated with the Mystique.

Respected video-card manufacturer Matrox has thrown its hat into the ring of 3D acceleration with the Mystique. Sadly, the only mystique about it is how they expect it to compete against the Rendition-based boards out there.

With 2MB and 4MB video RAM versions (we tested the 2MB), the Mystique is being pitched as the all-around solution for graphics power—providing speedy 2D performance, excellent Windows speed, reliably smooth video reproduction, and support for the upcoming slew of 3D games. This PCI card comes bundled with specially accelerated versions of Scorched Planet, MechWarrior 2, and a coupon good for a copy of Destruction Derby 2 when it ships.

Set up was fairly straightforward, with the documentation covering most of the potential problems facing video-card upgraders. The Powerdesk software that comes with the card adds a few tabs to the Display options in the Windows Control Panel, allowing you to customize your desktop size and resolution.

But the games are what we were interested in. After overcoming a bus-mastering problem—the 16MB P100 we tested the Mystique on did not support bus mastering, an option that has to be unchecked from the setup options—we were ready to roll. First up, Scorched Planet. The textures looked cool, with some very impressive MIP Mapping (pixel-smoothing at close distances) and excellent gouraud shading. But it ran slowly. In the heat of battle, the frame rate slowed to a disgraceful crawl. MechWarrior 2 suffered the same tragic fate.

Microsoft's Hellbender was intelligent enough to recognize that the Mystique doesn't support fogging, the effect of obscuring distant objects to avoid a pop-up effect. But the card still performed very poorly in comparison to any Rendition we've tested. At least the 2D performance of Duke Nukem running in 800-by-600 resolution was very good, as advertised.

To its credit, the Mystique is fully upgradeable through Rainbow Runner add-ons for hardware MPEG playback and a TV tuner. But for cutting-edge speed merchants, this card puts in a disappointing display (no pun intended). (Matrox; 800-844-8312; www.matrox.com; $179)

—Rob Smith

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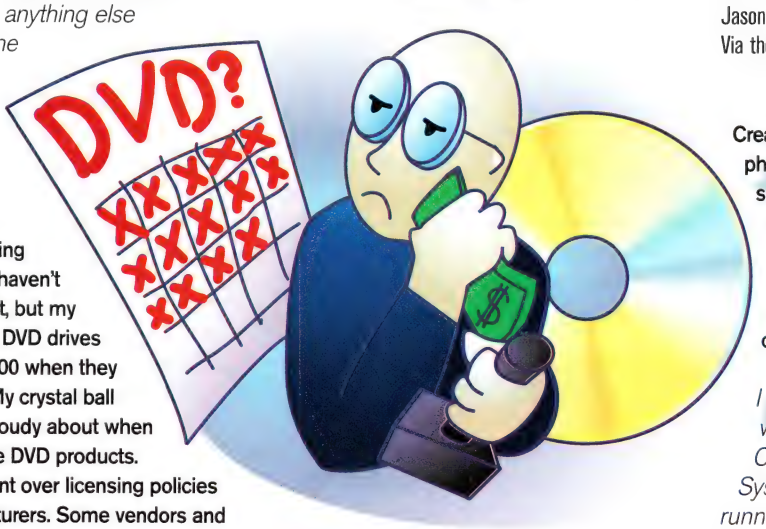
Category	Product	Details	Our Rating
PC	Falcon Mach V	Falcon Northwest; 800-258-6778; approx. $4,000	A
Monitor	Nokia Valugraph 447L	Nokia; 800-296-6542; $699	B+
CD-ROM drive	Toshiba TXM3501E1	Toshiba; 714-457-0777; price not available	B+
Sound card	AWE32	Creative Labs; 800-998-5227; $249.95	A
Speakers	SoundWorks	Cambridge SoundWorks; 800-367-4434; $219	A+
Joystick	F-16 Combatstick	CH Products; 619-598-2518; $69.95	A+
Gamepad	SideWinder gamepad	Microsoft; 206-882-8080; $39	A+
Modem	Supra 28.8	Supra; 800-727-8772; $219 internal, $299 external	A
Graphics card	Lightspeed 128	STB Systems; 800-234-4334; street price $164	B+
Key add-on	NEC MultiSync M700 monitor	NEC; 800-632-4636; $899	A-

By Patrick Marshall

S.O.S.

Hopping on the DVD Train, why temp files vanish, and getting around Win 95's protected mode.

I'm planning to buy a new computer that will not need to be upgraded for a while. I recently read the "DVD: The Next CD-ROM" article in your June issue (page 102). Now I'm wondering if I should buy a good 6X- or 8X-speed CD-ROM or wait for DVD. I don't have $700 to spend on a DVD drive when it comes out, so when do you think the prices will go down? Also, how much would the MPEG decoders cost? And is there anything else needed to adapt the DVD to the average computer?
Vladimir Perez
Via the Internet



It's always tricky talking about products that haven't actually appeared yet, but my crystal ball says that DVD drives will sell for about $500 when they first hit the market. My crystal ball is, however, a little cloudy about when we can expect to see DVD products. Industry disagreement over licensing policies has stalled manufacturers. Some vendors and analysts are predicting that units might be available in time for Christmas, while others say it may be as long as late next year before DVD hits the shelves.

So what's all the hype about? A standard DVD will hold 4.7GB of data, or about eight times the capacity of a standard CD. And the DVD drive transfers data faster than an 8X CD drive, making it capable of playing video very smoothly. What's more, all your old CDs should play just fine on the new unit. As you mentioned, though, to take full advantage of the DVD's multimedia capabilities, you'll need hardware to handle sound and MPEG-2 video decoding. Expect to fork out $200 to $500 for the necessary equipment.

That said, I'd go ahead and buy a fast, standard CD-ROM drive for your new system. Fact is, there isn't going to be much software that takes advantage of DVD's capabilities for a few months after its release. The first titles will very likely be standard, non-interactive movies on disc. By the time software titles appear in DVD format, the price of DVD drives will likely have dropped a little further. Besides, as with the first version of software, unless you absolutely must have a new piece of hardware right away, why not let others live through the inevitable bug hunt? Hop on the DVD bandwagon for the second trip around—say, about this time next year—and you'll probably get a smoother ride.

I had a bunch of files in my Temp directory, and one day they just disappeared. It happened later with some other files, too. I am certain no one deleted them, and I have run many virus scans with two different scanners to no avail. What's up with that?
Chris Doherty
Sandown, NH

Not to worry. Those temp files are supposed to disappear. Temp files are "temporary" files. They're created just to keep track of things during your current session. When you close Windows, the files are usually deleted automatically. The only time temp files stick around from one session to another is if your system crashes or if you otherwise shut down Windows prematurely. Check the file creation dates of any temp files you find. You can safely delete those that weren't created during the current session.

I own a Sound Blaster AWE 32 PNP sound card. I am using Windows 95 as my operating system. I bought it with a custom-built computer, and I got the disks and the literature that come with the card. My problem is that the disks do not have the Windows 95 driver for the sound card. I have already tried to deal with Creative Labs, but they just don't want to cooperate.
Jason Miklos
Via the Internet

Creative Labs might be hard to reach by telephone, but they do have an excellent Web site where you can download the driver you're after. Go to the following address: **www.creaf.com/wwwnew/tech/ftp/ftpnew.html**. The file you're looking for is SBW95UP.EXE. There are also drivers for other Sound Blaster cards at the site.

I recently got Win 95, and it works well except that when I go into Control Panel and then into the System utility, it says my system is running in MS-DOS compatibility mode. I tried changing it, but I don't know what's wrong. What do you think?
Brandon Goolsby
Via the Internet

Windows 95 can run in two basic modes: protected mode and real mode, which is MS-DOS compatibility mode. You'll find that almost all your applications run faster and are more stable when the system is running in Windows 95's 32-bit protected mode. Unfortunately, some of your older applications use drivers that are not compatible with this mode. That's why Windows 95 offers the option of kicking into the slower, 16-bit MS-DOS compatibility mode.

Check your AUTOEXEC.BAT and CONFIG.SYS files to see what drivers are loading. REMark out suspect drivers to see if their absence might eliminate the problem. (You REMark out drivers by typing REM at the beginning of the line that loads the driver.

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Remember to use an ASCII text editor, such as Wordpad, and not a word processor that uses its own file format.) Then, when you know which driver is causing Windows to run in DOS compatibility mode, you can contact the vendor to see if they have an updated driver for use with Windows 95. While older drivers are the most frequent cause of Windows using DOS compatibility mode, Microsoft's technical support staff warns that there are other possible causes:

• You've loaded an "unsafe" device driver, memory-resident program, or a virus that hooks into certain critical interrupts before Windows 95 loads.

• The hard-disk controller in your computer was not detected by Windows 95.

• The hard-disk controller was removed from the current configuration in Device Manager.

• There is a resource conflict between the hard-disk controller and another hardware device.

• A Windows 95 protected-mode driver that you're attempting to load is missing or damaged.

• The Windows 95 32-bit protected-mode disk drivers detected an unsupportable configuration or incompatible hardware.

By the way, among the few applications that often perform better under DOS compatibility mode are DOS games. In fact, if you're running DOS games, you'll generally find they work better if you boot to DOS instead of Windows 95.

With the arrival of many Win 95–only games, I finally decided to install Windows 95 on my system. I started to set it up from the CD and was hit with the following message (and booted back to Windows 3.1): "Warning SU0168: Your computer already has an operating system installed, which cannot be upgraded by this version of setup. Please obtain the Windows 95 upgrade."

I have Windows 3.1 on my computer. I've tried all my computer voodoo on it, and went to the Microsoft home page, and I can't find an explanation for this warning. Any help would be appreciated.

Nick Hunt
Via the Internet

The warning indicates that you've got a full version, not an upgrade version, of Windows 95. Either that or the installation routine is being tripped up by files left by a previous attempt at installation. There are workarounds, but knowing which one to use depends upon what files are present on your computer.

First off, you could take the Win 95 CD back to where you bought it and exchange it for the upgrade version.

Another more painful, less desirable solution is do the old "Format C:" command. This will wipe everything off of your hard disk. You'll be starting from scratch, and you'll have to reinstall everything on your PC. We don't recommend this except as a last resort.

Before you do that, call Microsoft technical support so they can try to troubleshoot the problem with you over the phone. Don't forget you've got 90 days of free technical support with every retail copy of Windows 95.

I can't get my CD-ROM to work under DOS. But it works fine under Windows 95! What's the problem?

Rian Goldfarb
Via the Internet

For your CD-ROM to work, a device driver has to be loaded, and separate drivers are required for Windows 95 and for DOS. It sounds like the Win 95 driver is loading just fine but the DOS driver isn't. Exit to the DOS prompt and reinstall the software that came with your CD-ROM drive. If you don't have the drivers, contact your CD-ROM manufacturer. You can generally get them from the company's Web page.

I own a 486DX2/80 with 16MB of RAM and a 2MB Local Bus graphics adapter. I am wondering if I should upgrade to a Pentium OverDrive 83MHz chip. Will this improve video performance? Or should I sell my system and buy a true Pentium computer?

Derrick Green
Via the Internet

The OverDrive processor will improve your system's performance, although I generally advise against the particular upgrade you're considering. You'll end up with a slow Pentium processor sitting in your even slower 486 motherboard. If you're willing to spend several hundred dollars for an OverDrive processor, why not spend another $200 and get a PCI motherboard? Of course, you'll also have to spend another couple of hundred dollars on a PCI graphics accelerator, but the end result will be much more gratifying, especially if state-of-the-art video performance is what you're after.

If you still want to try the OverDrive option, keep in mind that the OverDrive processor doesn't work in every 486. Contact either the maker of your computer or Intel (at 800-538-3373). You can also refer to Intel's Web page at **www.intel.com**.

Note:

In the October issue, a reader asked if there was a way to remove icons from the Windows 95 Control Panel. I answered that the Control Panel and its contents are considered part of the Windows 95 operating system and there is no way provided in the user interface to remove any of the icons or the utilities that lie behind them. I added that I didn't know of any undocumented way to dispose of Control Panel icons.

Actually, there is a way, as several readers pointed out. Control Panel icons are in .CPL files that are stored in the System subdirectory under Windows. Delete the appropriate .CPL file and the icon will disappear. Two cautions: First, the names of the .CPL files are not self-explanatory, so it may take several tries before you get the right one. Second, play it safe: Instead of deleting the .CPL files, simply rename them with a different extension. Then, if you change your mind, returning things back to where they started is painless.

Fax, mail, or e-mail your queries to the S.O.S. staff at:

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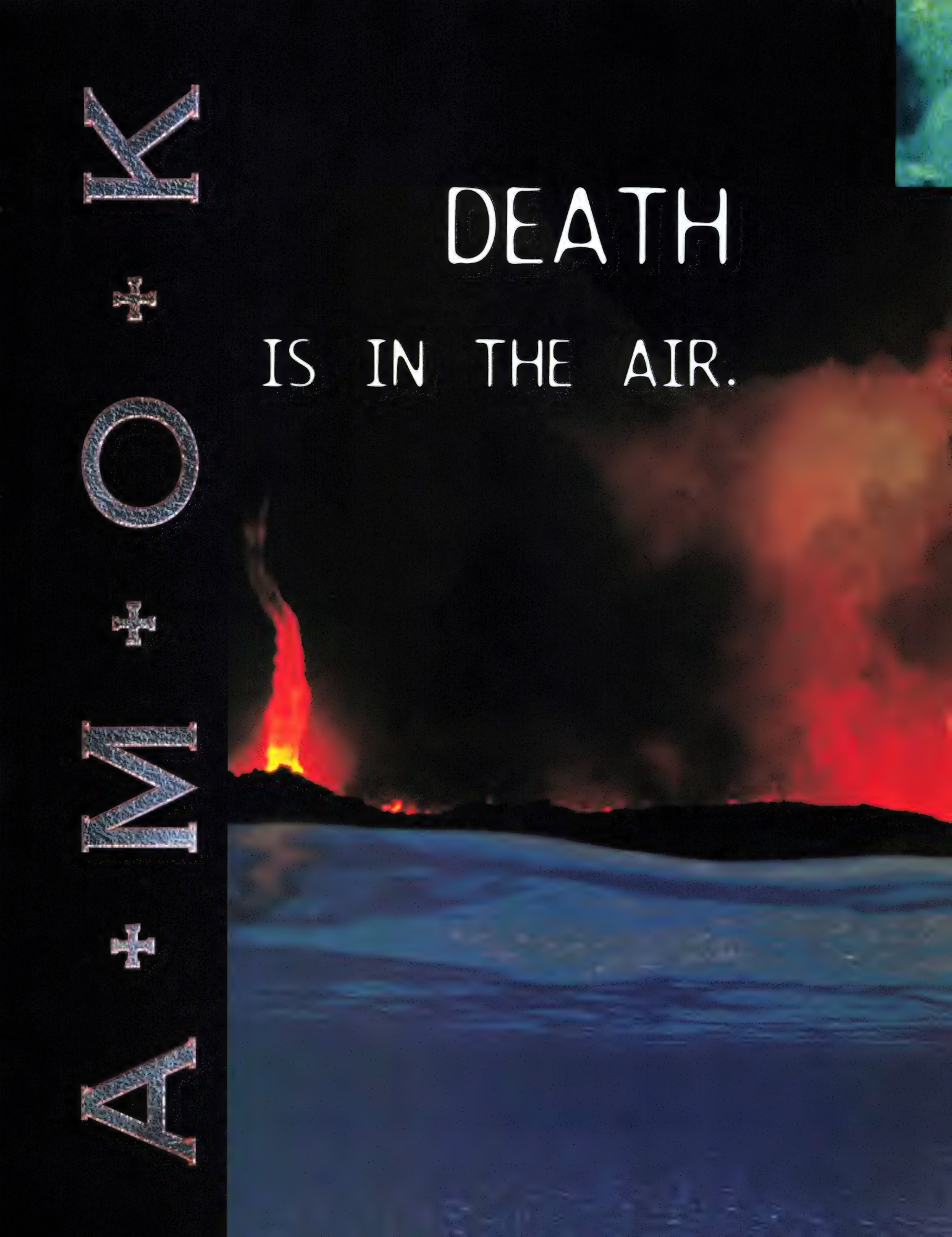
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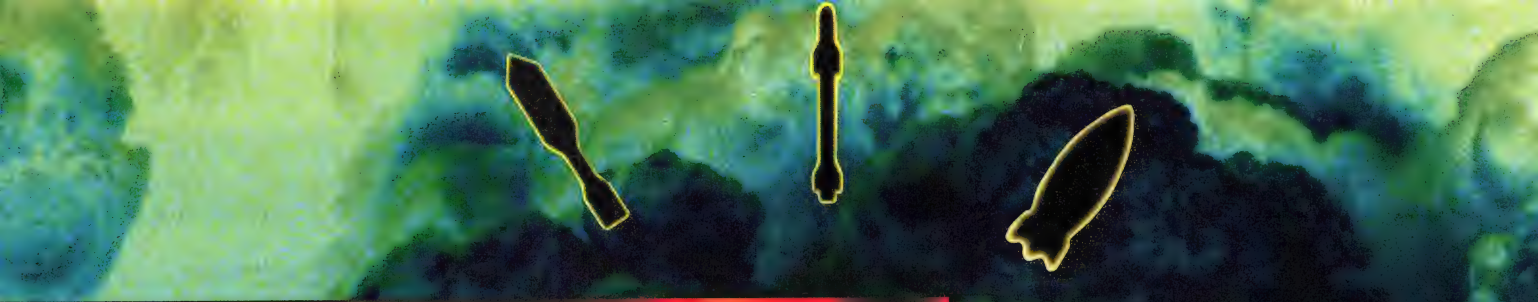
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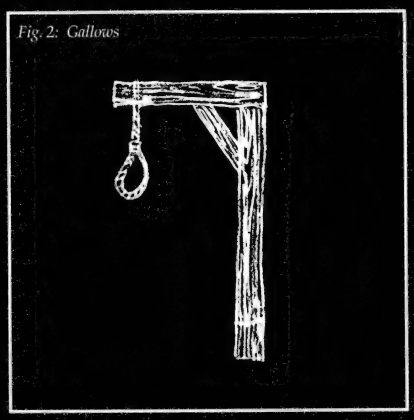
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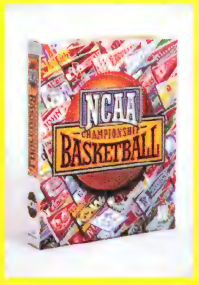
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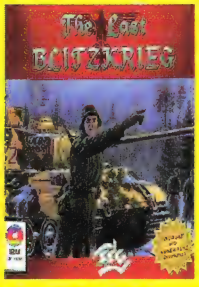
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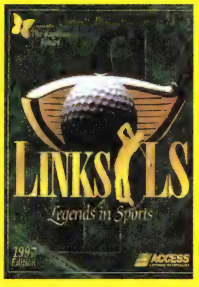
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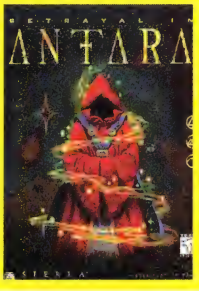
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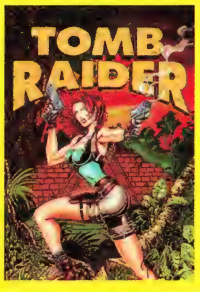
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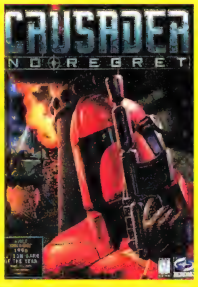
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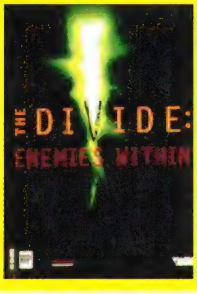
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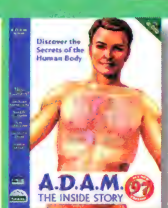
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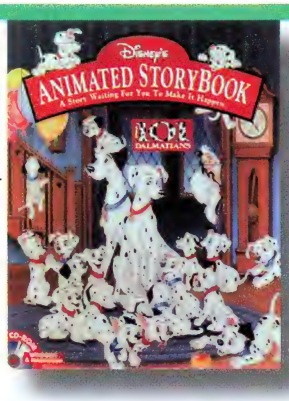
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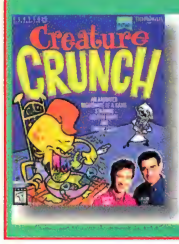
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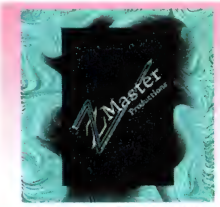
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Learn the History of Toonstruck —and Win!

Are you excited? We're excited. We just made our way through the new Toonstruck demo on this month's CD, and we liked it so much, we want to give you the whole game. In fact, we want to give 30 of you the game, and 10 of you the game plus original Toonstruck art. Virgin's been generous enough to offer the goods. But nothing that cool ever came easy...

...except that we're feeling nice, so we'll make it simple. You want to join Drew and Flux in their adventures? All you have to do is answer some piddly questions relating to the game. To qualify for a runner-up prize (the game), answer the three Cutopia questions; to qualify for a first prize (game plus art), answer all four questions. We'll sort through your entries and randomly choose winners from those with correct responses.









"Cutopia" questions

1 What popular TV series did Christopher Lloyd (Toonstruck's Drew Blanc) star in?

(A) *Magnum P.I.* **(B)** *Taxi* **(C)** *Soap*
(D) That pathetic excuse for *Star Wars* where this lame ship flew around looking for home while this stupid mechani cal dog annoyed everybody.

2 In Toonstruck, who's Drew's wise-cracking sidekick?

(A) Robin **(B)** Luggage
(C) Flux **(D)** Rick Jones

3 Just how eager are you to win Toonstruck?

(A) Ecstatic **(B)** Couldn't care less
(C) Felt like wasting a stamp
(D) So eager you'll send us all your old games (right on! anybody got Spy vs. Spy?)

"Malevolands" question

In the demo, who says, "Don't get smart, son—stay the way you are"?

(A) Woof **(B)** Drew **(C)** Jim **(D)** Warp

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To qualify, be sure to return your entry by December 31, 1996.

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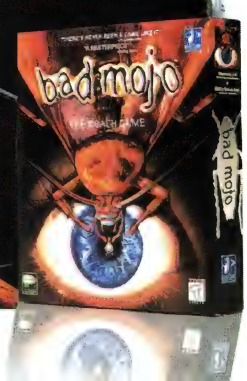
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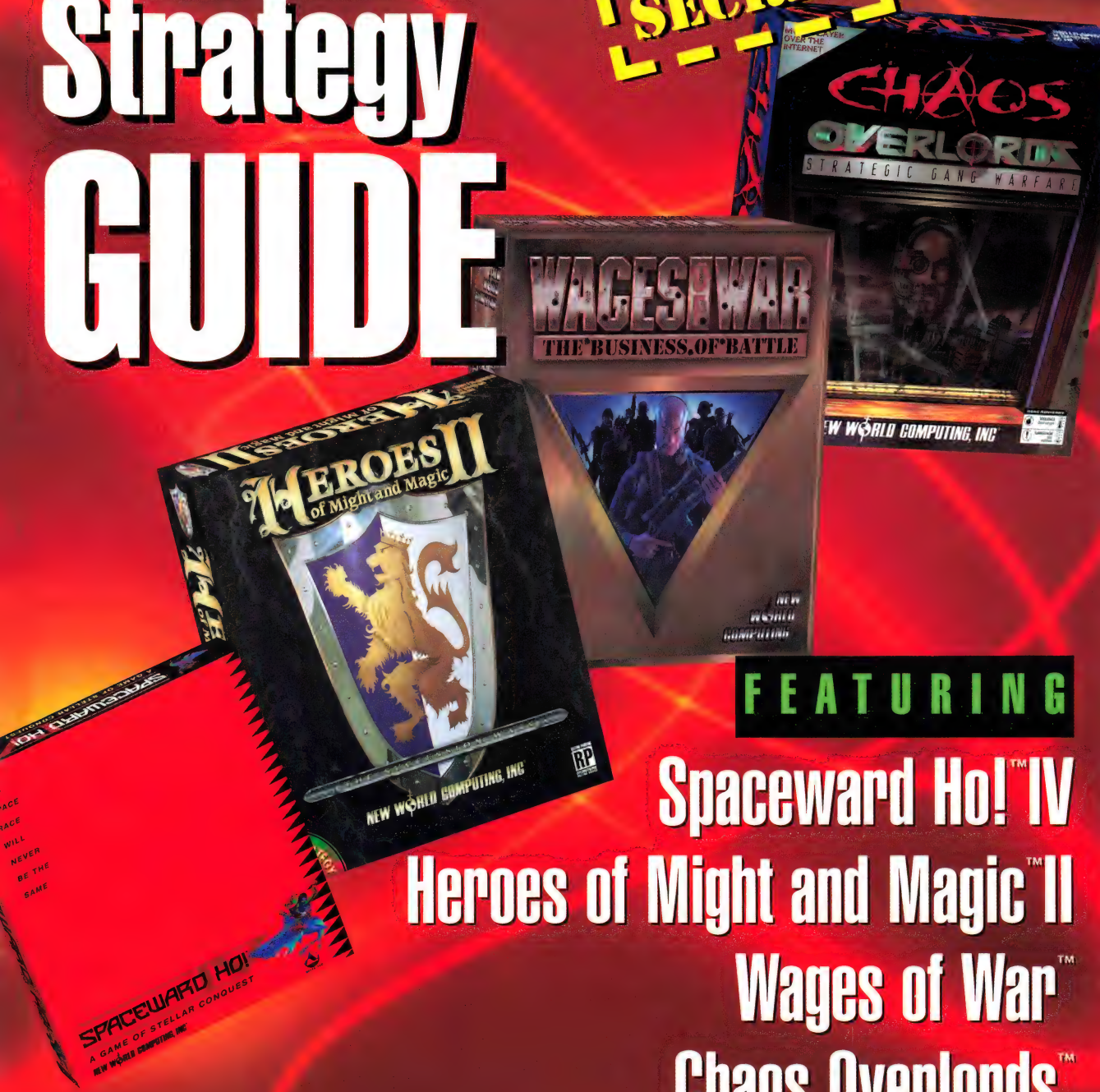
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Heroes of Might and Magic II™

THE SUCCESSION WARS



Everyone wants to be a hero, but few ever have a chance. Now comes Heroes of Might and Magic II: The Succession Wars. Picking up where Heroes of Might and Magic left off, Heroes II puts you in command of a small, but growing empire. Here are a few tips that will help you get started down the path of conquest and glory:



Wolves are the fastest Barbarian Monster

Hire a couple of heroes and give them only fast monsters to act as scouts. These scouts are especially useful in the beginning of the game because they can pick up tons of gold and artifacts early on before the other players have a chance to use them up. Warlocks often start the game with gargoyles (a fast monster) in their armies, and are ideal for scout duty. Remember that heroes only move as fast as their slowest troop!

Morale is important

Try to keep compatible monsters (monsters from the same type of town) together to reduce morale conflicts. If you have monsters from three or more different town types, this will reduce their morale and may cause them to freeze in combat, skipping their turns. Conversely, high morale may give some of your troops a second attack in one turn, doubling their effectiveness.

Build An Empire, Overrun A Continent, Crush Your Opponents, And Take The Throne.



Tie up those archers with flyers

Flying troops are valuable in combat against archers. If a flyer attacks an archer of (nearly) any sort, that archer cannot use its range attack against the rest of your army, and only does half damage against your flyer. Conversely, protect your archers from the enemy army by moving your ground troops in front of the archers you wish to defend. This will force the enemy to fight their way through your ground troops before they can get in your archer's way.

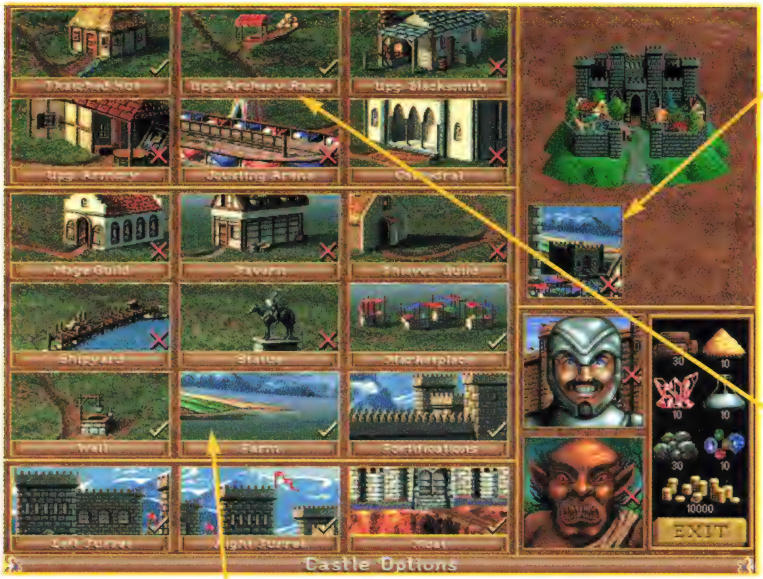
Spread out and attack

Start with your troops spread out! The new rules permit you to organize any number of troops in up to five 'monster stacks.' You can also choose to have your armies start close together or spread apart. Some monsters and most spell casting heroes have a way to damage groups of monsters clumped together. If you have your troops spread out and are using all five possible unit positions, you can minimize losses from area attacks.



Use 'storm' spells as a panic button

If, late in the game, you have a castle under attack by a vastly superior force, don't panic! There may be a way to save it. The trick is to hire a spell caster in a town that has the storm, armageddon, or holy word/death spell in its guild, and then send that hero on a suicide mission to reduce the strength of the attacker. Just enter the battle and cast your spell. The spell will probably destroy your hero's army, but it will greatly reduce your opponent's army. Repeat as needed.



Fortify your strongholds

In games where the computer is getting strong, build up your fortifications and buy troops with range attacks and lots of hit points. If you build a moat and build the two extra turrets, you will find the attacker MUCH easier to defeat. If you cannot afford to have a hero in your town at all times, be sure to hire a captain of the guard to cast support spells for your army.

Upgrade! Upgrade! Upgrade!

Don't overlook the new monster upgrade opportunities. For a small amount of gold and resources, you get an improved version of certain kinds of monsters. Archers, for instance, cost 150 gold at the usual price, and 200 gold at the improved (Ranger) price. The Rangers, however, enjoy more hit points, extra speed and two attacks per round–well worth the cost!

More Monsters!

Each type of castle has a special building available to increase the regeneration rate of their cheapest monsters. The Knight castle has a farm for the peasants, the Barbarian castle has a garbage heap for the goblins, and so on. Always build a well and the special 'Horde' building in towns you intend to recruit troops from. You will often find that money is less of a problem than extra monsters, so don't overlook these valuable buildings.



New spells provide a serious combat advantage

The new spell system also changes the way the game plays. Heroes II has moved to a spell point system to rebalance the way the spell casting characters work. While a hero slowly regains spell points if he has the right skill, heroes will not otherwise be able to regain spell points until they visit a well or start a turn in a town with a mage guild. Therefore, you should use your spells wisely! Don't cast a spell unless it will really help your cause, or you may not have the power to cast that lightning bolt when you really need it.



Skills are the keys to success

Preserve your heroes! The introduction of hero skills has changed the way the game plays a bit. Diplomacy, for instance, will help you buy or recruit monsters on the adventure map rather than automatically fighting them. There are 15 other skills available, covering everything from Necromancy to Archery, and they can be improved upon. Heroes that learn advanced versions of these skills can be very valuable, so you should retreat or surrender if you are certain to lose a battle. Remember that each hero is an investment in money and time, and the skill system makes that investment all the more valuable.

The bigger they are the harder they hit

Focus on building a primary hero that is capable of defeating any other hero on the board, and use this hero to take castles from your opponents thus reducing their income flow. Give this hero all the artifacts that you can, and focus on amplifying his/her skills and abilities as much as possible. Also, give this hero the best monsters you can afford!



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WAGES OF WAR™

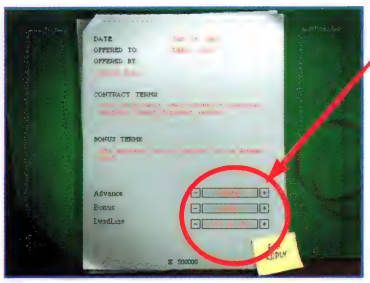
THE BUSINESS OF BATTLE

STRATEGY TIPS

To help you reach that pinnacle of material success, here are a few helpful hints.

Wages of War, the new strategy wargame from New World Computing, puts you in charge of your very own cut-throat mercenary-for-hire company. Choose from an assortment of lethal mercs and deadly weapons, negotiate for mission information, and keep track of valuable resources as you prepare for a variety of high impact scenarios.

Once in the field, strike where the enemy least expects, using all the firepower you can muster. But be quick! In Wages of War, there are no prisoners!



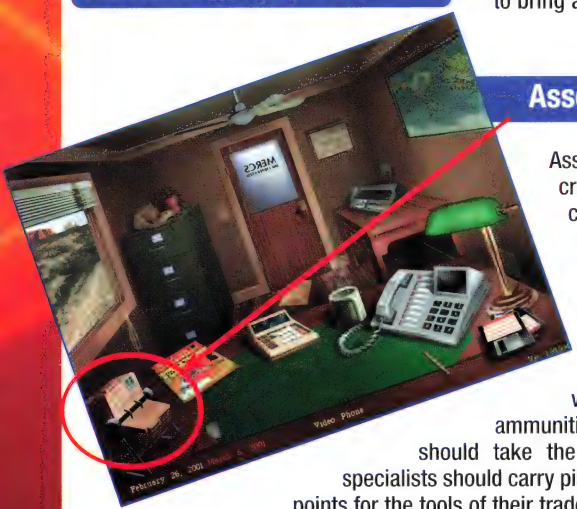
Time is of the essence

Make sure to keep your eye on the date. If you are running a campaign, make sure to negotiate for more time, even if it means taking less of a bonus when the mission is done.



Purchasing equipment

Buy the weapons that were recommended in the mission briefings. Also, try to purchase more than one weapon per mercenary. In case one breaks, it is always good to have a back-up. Grenades, especially smoke, and body armor, are also essential items to bring along.



Assemble the team

Assembling the right team is crucial. In general, try to buy a couple of 'shooters' (expensive mercs with skills), a couple of cheap, but decent mercs, and a specialist or two (depending on the mission). Equip your 'shooters' with the best weapons and the most ammunition you can afford. The others should take the secondary weapons. Your specialists should carry pistols and leave encumbrance points for the tools of their trade.

WHERE MEETS



Battlefield tactics

So you've made it to the field and your mercs are strategically deployed. Or so you think. The following tips may help you get them out alive.

Wages of War was designed so that strong squad level tactics will minimize casualties. Lay down cover fire to support men who are moving, and use all the cover available. If cover is scarce, use your smoke grenades.



Assaulting tips

When deploying your troops, be sure to use the 'right' mouse button when you move them. This will display arrows showing you how far your unit can move in that turn. Running short on action points at a crucial moment could compromise the whole mission.

When assaulting reinforced positions, don't bunch up! Spread out so the enemy can't concentrate their fire. It is usually best to break into fire teams and advance from two different directions.

FRONTLINE STRATEGY

BOTTOM LINE REALITY



Grenades

Be careful with your grenades! Your objectives vary with each mission. Some of those objectives can be damaged (or killed) by an inadvertent explosion, thus ending your mission prematurely.





Clean your mess

Try not to leave men and weapons in the field. Since your weapons are only leased, you will have to pay out of pocket for any weapon left behind. Furthermore, in the campaign mode, leaving mercs behind will severely damage your credibility, making it harder to hire good mercenaries for later missions.

As a final word of advice, Wages of War is a combination of both business strategy and battlefield tactics. Just remember, you can kick butt on the battlefield, but if you don't turn a profit, you're out of business!!

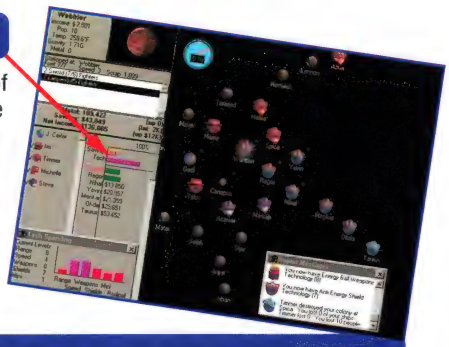
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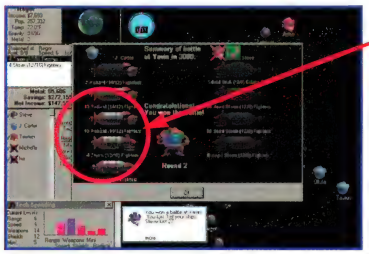
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Manage your technology

Establishing colonies early is only one part of success in Spaceward Ho!. You need to use those colonies to fund research into higher technologies. Set your Tech spending bar high, and choose the technologies you want to research. In a small map like this one, weapons, speed, and shields are important because you are in combat early. Having the technology is not enough, you need to implement it in developing ships to attack your neighbors. So make sure to "balance" your game play in Spaceward Ho!.





Know your ships

Colony ships are the most important ships in the game because they are the only ships that can establish new colonies, and the first to be attacked in combat. Ships fire in the order of their speeds. The more ships you have firing, the more damage you do. The number of ships you have is not enough, however, technology makes all the difference. Quality matters as much as quantity, a few high technology ships are as good as a swarm of low technology ships because high shields can negate low weapons, and high weapons can almost ignore low shields.

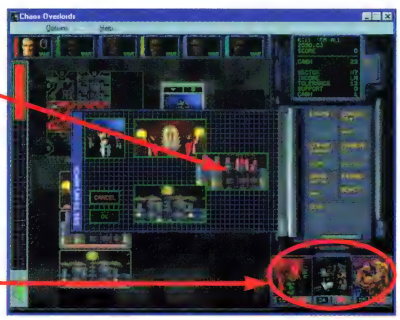
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Influence the meek

Look for Casinos, Corporate Towers, Offices, and Arenas to generate cash for your hordes, and make sure to capture a Research Center or a Science Center and research, research, research! When you've got sufficient technology to kick some serious butt look for Ground Zero and Rig Masters troops and outfit them to the max!

Hire the right "talent"

Let's talk combat!! Okay, during the early game you won't have a lot of the cool stuff researched and Ground Zero's Packin' Pistols are really a waste! So focus on hiring the substructure of your empire, look for those martial artists like the Ebon Order or Tiger Clan. Also look for your 'little guys' like Disgruntled Postal Workers and Rusted Blades. With over 80 different gangs to hire, make sure to cycle through your possible gangs! Either hire or fire one every turn, so you can get to the big boys sooner rather than later!

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Nitro Racers™

MERIDIAN 59™



You and thousands of other Internet explorers are about to join forces in the first 3D animated, multi-user RPG on the Net! Band together with an international cast of real players—like yourself—as you explore and battle fantastic monsters or each other. Unlike a typical PC product, Meridian 59 is ONLY played on the Internet, but don't worry because the game comes with Netscape Navigator™ and one-button access to the Net. It's simple to let your Internet quest begin, it's harder to stay alive. Here are some tips:



Hint:
Rest in a guild hall or inn to recover your vigor twice as quickly.

How to stay alive

Keep an eye on the critical areas of health, mana, and vigor to ensure that you can survive, cast spells, and heal after a rigorous battle. Some tips to help boost your precious stats: use a Heal spell to restore lost health points; to enhance your vigor, remember to rest and eat often (both health and mana recoup faster if vigor is high).



Keys to your survival

- Know your enemy and make sure you don't take on opponents you're not ready to handle. Baby spiders and giant rats will provide sufficient challenge for a new citizen. More advanced fighters should pursue slimes, spiders and trolls.
- Be aware of the karmic properties of the various fauna. Some of them are of good karma and should not be attacked without provocation.
- Don't forget that you can also use magic during combat.
- Fight in pairs if you question your strength.

Know your enemies



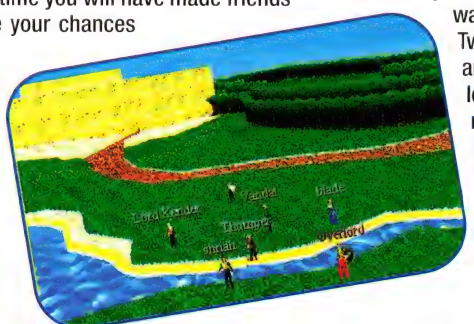
Beware of players with red and orange names. Players with red names are murderers! Players with orange names are outlaws who also have been known to attack innocent citizens (with less success), or cast harmful magic.

Don't worry - as a new player you are safe until you get 30 health points. By that time you will have made friends and allies to increase your chances of survival.

Hint:
Have a mage enchant your weapon to add zing to your blows.

Don't be caught alone

Exploration of the mysterious world of Meridian can bring knowledge, wealth and power. To avoid danger on your way to distant parts, stick to the roads! Or ask a more experienced traveler to show you the way. Destinations you might want to seek out include: the Twisted Wood, the Great Ocean and the dreaded Badlands. Also look for temples (each offering new spells to learn), Castle Victoria (for intensive combat), the Cemetery of Tos (zombies come out at night), and the Arena (test your might against fellow players).



Mastering your skills



If you seek to excel in the combat arts, you would do well to acquaint yourself with Rook in Cor North, Meridian 59's premier Weapon's Master. Rook is generous with free advice and wisdom regarding the worthiness of your potential adversaries. Remember to practice your skills often (and try offering Rook shillings to acquire more knowledge).

Develop spell casting abilities



Some Meridian residents focus their energies primarily on magic as they strive to become an expert spell caster and deemed a "mage." Meridian's legendary schools of magic are located in temples hidden throughout the land.

Shal'ille — includes spells of healing, blessing & protection.

Kraanan — oriented towards protection and defensive spells (considered the most fitting for warriors).

Riija — blink spell given to all new citizens.

Qor — highly potent spells that come at a high karmic cost (often sought by assassins and murderers).

Faren — chaotic, hard-to-control attack spells with no karmic orientation at all.

Hint:
To learn spells most efficiently concentrate on one school at a time.

the Internet Quest Begins

Hidden areas



There are numerous secret passages and hidden shortcuts connecting all corners of Meridian. Those who know them have a tremendous tactical advantage. We will share some of these secrets, but be cautious as you travel to unknown parts (we recommend you take a friend):

- South of Tos, in Ukgoth, there is a circle of power that can offer a mage more mana if you can unlock its secrets. Be warned that the trolls are protective of their holy land.
- In the depths of the druid hills, west of Marion, there exists a cavernous entrance. The rumors of great rewards have sent many adventurers into the icy depths, but few have ever returned.
- Experienced players may find it worth their while to visit the Duke's Keep or the Princess's Castle and offer their fealty to the liege within. It may be difficult at first (try asking the elders for help), but your character will fight harder and learn faster if your faction achieves power and glory.



Be watchful for weapons and items you can collect throughout the game. The ultimate prize for fighters is the Mystic Sword, a fierce and deadly weapon.

Mages should seek out a circlet, a magical band that converts life force to mana. There are also rumors of a ring that will make you invisible to the naked eye.



Guilds: strength in numbers



Guilds are the basic social unit of Meridian society. There are many different guilds in Meridian, each with its own style and goals. The ultimate accomplishment for any guild is to take possession of its own guild hall. You are eligible to join a guild when you accumulate 30 health points.

Each guild has a specific purpose, decided by its members. Some guilds devote themselves to helping new citizens. Others are devoted to notorious acts of murder and pillage.

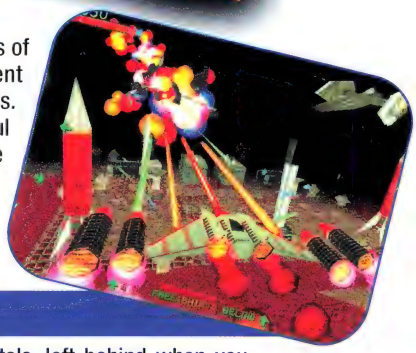
If you are wise and powerful, or merely wealthy and vain, you can start your own guild, and name yourself guildmaster. However, the members of your guild have the option to vote you out of office if they are not satisfied with your leadership.

SEE YOU IN THE GAME! For more information call: 1(800) 336-3506 http://www.3do.com/meridian

STARFIGHTER™



Aerial battles never before reached the feverish heights of Star Fighter, in which you execute 60 different complex missions while fighting incredible 3D battles. You take the controls of the Star Fighter, the most powerful aircraft ever, and battle dozens of land, sea, air and space enemies with a huge arsenal of weapons. This action/flight-simulator gives you complete freedom of movement within multiple 3D polygon worlds, and it demands attention to strategy. Pilots, take note of this pre-flight briefing!



General hints

It is better to upgrade the ship one step at a time with power-up crystals, left behind when you destroy air and ground targets, rather than getting a Megaship from a parachute. The Megaship has a limited duration, but crystal-based upgrades are permanent.

It's more than a battleground...

Surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) have a limited range and will blow up if they fly too high. If SAMs are heading in, climb at full speed, wait for them to blow up and return for another attack. Deploying an ECM as a SAM is being launched will detonate the SAM and will damage its site.

To destroy buildings without having to execute a strafing run, fly up to the target and begin looping. While looping, fire your lasers as the building becomes a target until it is destroyed.

When the message "Parachute drop detected" appears on screen, immediately go to your map screen to determine its location. Once located, return to the game screen, and move to those coordinates to intercept the parachute before it reaches the ground. Parachutes will yield various power-ups, and may even give you a Megaship!

Mission hints

Here are hints for a few of the 60 missions.

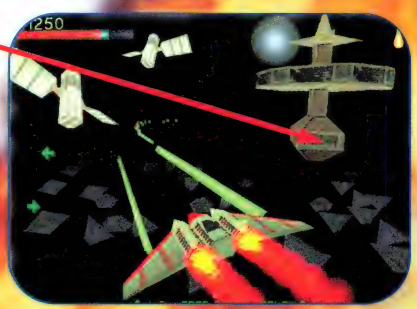


The Wastelands

Target the radar dishes after launch. Then find and destroy the remaining ground targets. Eliminate the aircraft hangers first to reduce the threat of enemy fighters. If you don't, you'll have to deal with one of these guys.

The Space Station

Set your formation to defensive and destroy the space station. Then, eliminate each satellite. The enemy fighters can be destroyed by flying through the asteroid field. Shoot asteroids to collect crystals before returning to the mothership to complete the mission.



Central intelligence

Destroy the satellites, then concentrate on the ground targets. Ignore the fighters. Eliminate the SAM threat by destroying each base near the rockets with ATG missiles. Then clear out the ground guns. Allow your ship's shields to recharge between attacks. After the SAM bases have been neutralized, destroy any remaining ground guns and target the rockets. Set the number two camera to an external head-on view of the fighter to allow incoming SAMs to be visualized.

Stratoliners

Target either cargo vessel immediately after launch. Use full throttle to get to their location. Fire multiple ATA missiles at each target. Use lasers, if necessary, to complete their destruction.

Sneak attack

Destroy the large building at map location E5 to destroy all of the smaller radar dishes. Then, eliminate the two large radar towers at either end of the line of targets to complete the mission.

It's a mind field.

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KILLING TIME™

Part Mystery. Part Mayhem. Pure Terror! You're the first person to step on Matinicus Isle in over 60 years. Surrounded by hosts of the undead, you'll need to use your brains and shotgun blasts to shatter the spell that has kept the island in a horrific limbo. Not just a sophisticated shooter laced with dark humor, Killing Time's gameplay is reminiscent of the first-person corridor mayhem of Quake™ and the puzzle solving intricacies of The 11th Hour: the sequel to the 7th Guest.™

Overall strategy

You must search thoroughly to collect all of the keys. Your left wing-display (and health meter) will fill with jewels as each key is collected. The keys will give you access to areas that contain the mystic winged vessels. You will need to collect all of the winged vessels to complete the game. These vessels contain the life essence of Tess Conway and are necessary to solve the mystery and destroy the curse.

Some Games Are Tough. This Game's Murder



Supernatural storyline

Listen closely to the remembrances of the 7 video-real apparitions and ghostly guests. They offer clues as to what past heinous acts actually transpired in the cursed mansion.

Paranormal puzzles

After you've taken care of the various guardians that surround this fountain outside the Kennels, be sure to carefully inspect the statue. Remember that this calm water has to flow somewhere, and it probably ends up in the sewer. If you find the right combination of switches on the statue, you'll discover a secret passage to the sewer.



Hidden areas

At the bluff overlooking the lighthouse, step to the left and search for the steps cut into the rock. Use the Look Down Key to negotiate the difficult stone walkway. At the top, turn left to find a hidden cave filled with ammunition.

Many of the fountains on the island serve much more than ornamental purposes. Remember that most of that water travels down to the sewer...



Weapon techniques

- SHOTGUN More blood for the bullet! While this boomstick doesn't fire as rapidly as the tommy gun, it does big damage at close range. The best tactic is to charge your opponent and fire at the same time. This will wound the enemy at the same time as you close the distance so that the second shot will do maximum damage.
- FLAME THROWER The flame thrower should be fired almost exactly the opposite of the shotgun. Do not shoot in a straight line and continue advancing. Rather, learn to strafe with your flame either by sidestepping or by pivoting while firing.
- MOLOTAV COCKTAIL Molotav cocktails will bounce several times before they explode. This may let you explode the cocktail down a hallway and around a corner, for example.

Secrets revealed

The secret abilities of the mystic winged vessels are hereby revealed (well, at least some of them)!

Blue
Enhanced Stealth Abilities

Aqua
Mystic Knowledge of Secrets

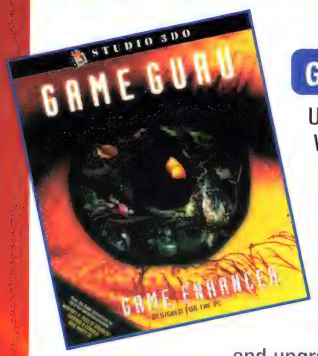
Red
Capacity to Carry Unlimited Items

Yellow
Mystic Death Charge



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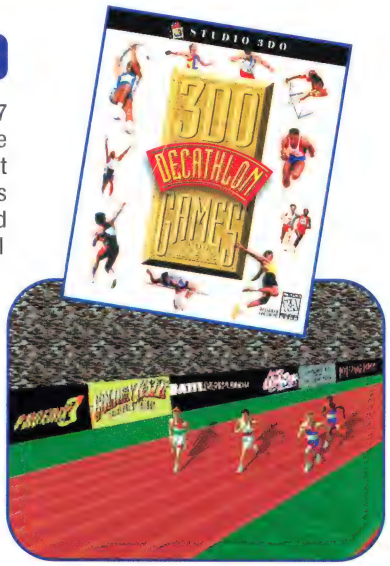
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Hint: Download the latest codes and get a list of all supported titles at:
http://www.3do.com/studio3do/gameguru

3DO Games: Decathlon™

Step onto the track as you and up to 7 friends compete head-to-head for the coveted title of World's Greatest Athlete. Motion captured world-class athletes provide stunningly smooth and realistic 3D animation. Compete in all 10 events including hurdles, pole vault, and javelin. And because you can completely customize your athlete in all aspects including levels of strength, stamina, and speed, you'll feel like it's really you out on the track.

Hint: Make sure you hit the lean button at the end of the running events. Leaning into the tape can mean the difference between world class champion and world class loser.



Captain Quazar™

Play a rapid fire, search and destroy shooter that doesn't take itself too seriously. With 13 different weapons you'll have all the firepower you need to root out the evil crime lords that have taken control. But don't blow everything away. You will also need your brain as you explore immense levels (400 screens each) and manage your resources to survive. Non-stop enemy action with over 2000 frames of comic book style animation gives the intense gameplay a refreshing style all its own!



Hint: Try the spin move, by simultaneously holding down the left or right direction key, the Tank Controls key, and the Fire A button. This will send Captain Quazar into a head-dizzying spin and lay down a rain of bullets that should take care of any nearby bad guys.

Nitro Racers™

Multi-player, arcade action racing has never been such a rush! Nitro Racers is a top-view, car racing game which supports up to 8 drivers simultaneously. There are no rules on these tracks as you muscle past your competition (or through them). Race on 30 different tracks offering such diverse surfaces as asphalt, sand, mud, ice and grass. And if it's collisions you want, you'll find plenty of crashes, spins, rolls, and flips. Over 2400 frames of rendered car animations, a highly developed AI, and pixel perfect collision detection create a highly addictive racer that's almost impossible to put down.

Hint: Ease off the accelerator when heading into the last turn, then punch in the turbo boost coming out of the turn to blow your competition away.





For more information call: 1(800) 336-3506 http://www.3do.com/studio3do

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Follow the onscreen instructions.

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